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MANCHESTER QUARTERLY ADVERTISER,

JULY, 1899.

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VIECHTENSTEIN.—Château of Count Pachta.



DOWN THE DANUBE.

BY W. V. BURGESS.

MY first acquaintance with the Danube was made many years ago, whilst I was still under the spell of a youthful, and questionably wise, ambition to swim across every important river in Europe. This ambition, by the way, was duly consummated before the fervour of its impulse had entirely subsided, and even since then, the width of many a noble river, situated in one or other of the remaining three continents, has been traversed *in puris naturalibus*.

The Danubian retrospect, however, with which we are at present concerned, is of quite recent date, and is limited mainly to that portion of the river which flows in an easterly direction between Budapest in Hungary, and the famous Iron Gates on the confines of Roumania; a course of river as full of absorbing interest as it is abounding in delightful scenery, and which, moreover, is as yet altogether unspoiled by the objectionable conventionalities incident to a popular and hackneyed tourist route.

We joined the Danube at Passau, and before the stars had disappeared from the morning sky, we had cast off and were well under way for Vienna. The river between these two points, having Linz for middle distance, though

comparatively well known, scarcely ever receives the full mead of praise it deserves. The flow of water is more majestic than that of the Rhine, the mountains guarding its course are grander, and the chateaux and ruined castles on its shores are associated with legends, if not as numerous at least as wild and alluring, as any connected with the sister-stream. The steamers, which are clean, commodious, and well managed, accomplish the down-river journey in a little less than fourteen hours, though double this time is necessary for the reverse passage.

The river had a wonderfully mystical aspect as, in the grey half-light of dawn, we left behind us the towers and spires of Passau. We watched the first gleams of sunrise touch peak and cliff, steal down the lower slopes, and presently flick the swishing waters with a glitter of golden radiance. Soon the yellows and greens of the foliage, and the rainbow-coloured patches of flowers became distinct, and we settled ourselves at the prow of the boat to enjoy the continually changing panorama. On we sped between pine-clad hills and beetling cliffs, past crumbling shrine and handsome schloss, here we called at a sleepy quay, and there we tapped a busy mart. Linz was reached, explored and deserted, then awhile, and the steamer shot the Greiner Schwall rapids, emerged upon a wider stretch of water, threaded its course through numerous islands, till in the glow of early evening the domes and steeples of Austria's queenly Capital came slowly into view.

Only those who have really experienced the beguiling charms of stately Vienna, with its Stefan-Kirche, its Ring-Strasse, its Prater, and its Schönbrunn, can understand with what feelings we ultimately tore ourselves away from its fascinating attractions to resume our river journey. A small steamer conveyed us from Franzens-Brücke down the Danube canal to Pratereck, where our transfer to the

large main-river boat was effected. The distance hence to Buda is about equal to that which separates Passau and Vienna—that is a full day's sail with the stream. After submitting ourselves to the tender care of the comestible department, our usual complacency returned, and we leisurely set about an inspection of our surroundings. The deck was fairly spacious, awning-shaded in part, and accommodated with seats, so disposed as not to interfere with the space available for promenading. A considerable sprinkling of Slavonic character among our fellow voyagers, gave an interestingly foreign tone to the groups which were scattered about. Beyond the boat, the scenery was by no means striking, the broad clear bosom of the river was dotted with clusters of low islands, overgrown with dusky-green willows and fringed with tall reeds or rushes. Passing under the walls of Hainburg, the strains of an itinerant orchestra reached us, and recalled the fact that near this place Haydn, the composer, was born. The monotonous character of the banks prevailed until we approached the lower spurs of the Little Carpathians, upon one of which we shortly observed the old quadrangular castle of Pressburg. We tried with difficulty to imagine that this tranquil, picturesquely piled-up old town was once the Royal Capital of Hungary. That here the youthful and defenceless Queen Maria Teresa, by beauty of person and force of character, roused her chivalrous subjects to maintain their rights, and vindicate her sovereignty. Again the margin of the river became flat and featureless, except for the essentially foreign *cachet* it borrowed from the rude and ungainly water-wheels which at intervals lined its course. Soon we were gliding by the "Golden Gardens," fertile islands, from thirty to fifty miles in length, which lay along the course of the Danube. Now the prodigal waters had widened out into

a great silent lake, huge patches of whose surface were darkened with the broad leaves of the water lily, and starred over and over with the white and gold of its flowers. The width of the river here must be reckoned by miles, and its sombre olive depths are only relieved by the surface-reflected clouds of the many-tinted sky. For hours our boat moved with such steady progress, that we might have imagined ourselves becalmed. The far off shores, endlessly varied in contour, decreased gradually in colour intensity, to an etherealised grey, and in the great heat of the summer afternoon, a silence absolute fell upon scene and people alike—nothing but the deadened throb of the steamer's engine disturbed the brooding quietness. There was solitude without any sense of desolation, perfect stillness, but with the spirit of peace pervading it. All this became altered, however, as we steered in the sunset light towards the proud palace of the Palatines. The river was all astir with boat and barge as we passed under the handsome suspension bridge, where the scene assumed an animated appearance almost bewildering compared with the reposeful solitude we had just left. Surely, we thought, as we drew near the landing quay, no capital in the whole world is more gloriously situated than is this twin-city of Budapest. Pesth on the left hand with its magnificent piles of public buildings, its terraced squares and tree shaded promenades, its porticoed shops and handsome quays. Buda on the right, venerable and dignified, dominated from the heights of its rocky acivity by the old yellow-walled palace and a bold commanding escarpment fortress, both base-garlanded with veritable hanging gardens of almost Oriental splendour. Between these two, the old and the new cities, the waters of the mighty Danube sweep in majestic beauty. We shall not stay now to describe even the principal attractions of the impressive

metropolis of Hungary. This being a second visit, a few days only were needed to go over the points and objects of interest which had previously attracted our especial attention.

The steamer left Budapest at 10 p.m., and at that hour we stood upon the deck. The night was clear and balmy. Slowly the myriad lights of the gay capital sank behind us; bye and bye only a few glimmering points, high up the Blocksburg, were discernable, and seeking the seclusion of our sleeping cabin, we were soon oblivious of all things external. Next morning we were disturbed by the steamer impacting against the wooden pier of Baja, and our slumbers were wholly put to flight by the morning *réveillé* of a bird which had perched in the unclosed porthole of our cabin. Ascending to the deck while it was yet early morning, we could see the broad river speeding on without a ripple breaking the glass-like surface of its dull grey waters. The mist which hung between us and the further shore was suffused from above with a luminous glow, the nearer buildings and trees, phantom-like and colourless, were just visible, but distant objects were strangely contorted or altogether obliterated. Some unexplained delay afforded us the opportunity of examining the numerous boats, capacious and deeply laden with wheat and Indian corn, which were moored alongside the quay. We were informed that this was a noted grain distributing centre, and stepping ashore we were interested in watching the operations of the corn market, and in noting the provincial peculiarities of Hungarian dress and manners.

Another two hours and we had arrived at Mohács, situated in the midst of a gently undulating plain, and surrounded with enormous tracts of maize and vine covered land. There were scores of bathers, in a secluded arm of the river, taking their morning dip. This sight

was refreshingly invigorating, when contrasted with the last bathing we had witnessed in the Kaiserbad at Budapest. There in a huge tank of tepid sulphur-water, and an atmosphere wreathed in steamy vapour we had viewed the not altogether attractive sight of a score or more men and women bathing promiscuously together, a lolling-about-and-bobbing-up-and-down company of wrinkled naiāds and corpulent tritons. What the particular ailments were which necessitated such peculiar treatment we were unable to learn, but they get cured, or, as the bad-meister significantly observed, "They fancy they do." Mohács, other than its quaint rows of thatch-roofed houses, possesses no features of scenic interest; it is, however, historically famous as the spot where in 1526, Solyman the Magnificent utterly vanquished the Christians and placed Hungary under Ottoman rule, a supremacy which lasted 150 years.

During the remainder of that long brilliant summer day we forged along with the stream, and where the land was flat the bright sunshine lay on vast plains of maize which stretched away far beyond the reach of sight. On the left bank a good road now skirted the river, here bridging a tributary, there spanning a narrow glen, passing through wood and marsh, curving, rising, and falling with the course and contour of the shore, for at least fifty miles. Sometimes we called at some very curious wooden landing stages and were witnesses of some strange meetings, and hearers of, doubtless, some stranger colloquies if we could have understood them. In Hungary, except among the officials, there is nothing spoken but Hungarian. The people are inordinately proud of their Magyar language, which they say was introduced into the country by the Magyars themselves when they over-ran the land a thousand years ago. It is a difficult tongue for another nationality to acquire, but an extremely pleasant one to listen to. One

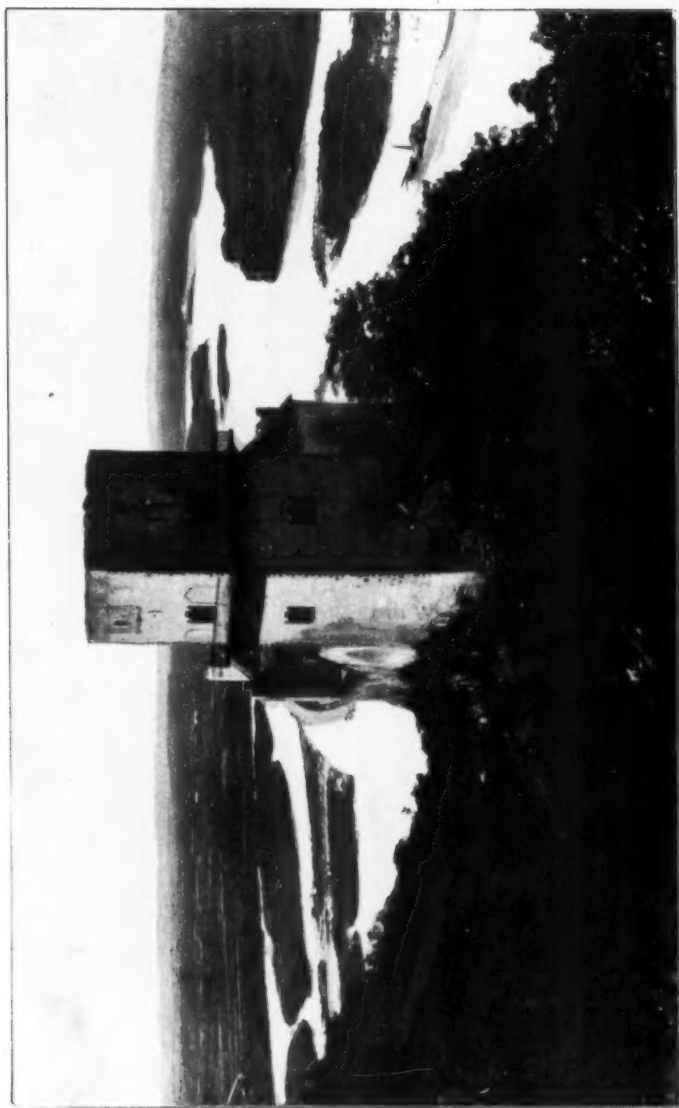
remarkable thing is its almost entire freedom from anything like *patois*. The signboards over the Hungarian shops written in this character have a quasi-Greek look about them. *A propos* of signboards, we remember seeing one near a riverside quay bearing in English this incongruous legend: "Porkmeat and other groceries made here."

Suddenly the river gave a sharp turn, and we descried across the peninsula made by the curve, the bold rocky fortress of Peterwardein. As we approached this lofty and romantically situated old citadel, the day was nearly done, the broad waters of the river were splashed with sunset colours, a rich glow came from betwixt the hills, suffused the dim dusky woods, and fell aslant the several headlands that lay across the distance in front of us. Whilst yet contemplating the gold and purple ripples that diverged from our prow, and sank behind in moving effects of nameless tints, we found ourselves coming to rest at the base of the castle-crowned rock. A few minutes afterwards and we had laboured up the tortuous ascent of the citadel, from whence a vision of enchantment broke upon us impossible of description. Long after the sun was lost to view the heavens retained marvellous tones of salmon-pink, golden-green, and pearly-gray, against which the hills appeared like transparent screens, the nearer plain was filled with violet shadow, and through it the river wound like a sinuous track of subdued glory. Somewhere from below the tinkling of bells was heard, here and there among the narrow streets far beneath us, among which lie the bones of the great crusader, John Capistranus, glimmering lights appeared, and then the yellow moon sailed into an infinite expanse of indigo sky. We thought nature had never proffered to us a more exquisite scene. And so with the stars gleam-

ing and paling above us, the mystery of night about us, and the spell of its stillness upon us, we descended to our steamer, there to sleep and perchance to dream of a night never to be forgotten.

Early the succeeding morning we were cutting through the cool sweet air, under a cloudless canopy of sunny blue. Soon we touched at Karlowitz, of plum-brandy fame, and here we took on board quite a crowd of vintagers who in spite of their wild looks and brigandish apparel, behaved with grave courtesy towards us and each other. We were told by the director of the University Library at Budapest that the Hungarians were a sober and pure spoken people, from which we inferred, after a little experience, that they were perhaps too poor to afford plum-brandy, and that their language was too difficult to lend itself to voluble or artistic swearing. Of the latter surmise, our linguistic deficiency disqualifies us from speaking as an authority, but of the former we can truthfully say that during our journey through the whole length of Hungary we never saw a case of inebriation. In some parts of Germany drinking and oath uttering are proverbial, in Austria they are less so, and if drinking decreases in ratio in Hungary its concomitant must also decrease, so that the dictum of Monsieur le Directeur, that the Magyars are a pure spoken people, is logically right after all.

In the meantime we had arrived at the last Hungarian town on the Danube, Semlin, the home of John Hunyadi. The town, which we entered shortly after landing, had a sort of Rip van Winkle look about it, as if the people had left it along with John Hunyadi, five hundred years ago, and had not yet returned. There was a depressing air about the deserted wide thoroughfares, and the closely shuttered though somewhat fine buildings. Someone says there are eighteen thousand inhabitants in the town and



GREIFENSTEIN.—The ruined Castle of Prince Liechtenstein.

its suburbs, we did not see more than eighteen units. We lunched, save the mark, in a patio, with fowl perched above our heads, filth beneath our feet, and in our ears the music of a fountain which was supplied from a tub hoisted in the midst of an adjoining mulberry tree.

That night we supped and slept, or tried to do, in Belgrade, the capital of Servia. The place was literally swarming with immense beetles, frogs and mosquitoes. As we strolled along the quiet streets, brilliantly lighted with electricity, we started thousands of toads and water beetles from beneath our feet, while myriads of mosquitoes buzzed about our heads. Long after we had retired, the silence of the night was made hideous with the croking of amphibians and the buzzings of insects. The higher part of the town which we visited next morning, we noticed with regret, was fast losing that Oriental appearance which had so charmed us on a previous visit. Large modern hotels and fine public buildings have taken the place of the flat-roofed palaces and Turkish bazaars.

Again we took up our Danube journey, and before many hours had passed, the river was tumbling between the deep gorges of the Southern Carpathians. The scenery became wild in the extreme, we sailed under gaunt frowning precipices at the bases of which the pent up waters dashed back in long rolling waves, under the dark shadows of enormous cliffs and towering peaks we sped, then out into a spacious lake whose surface was wrinkled with fearful looking whirlpools. Here and there on jutting rocks and in apparently inaccessible spots, were to be seen the ruins of medieval castles and strongholds of Roman origin. We were now fairly in the great defile of Kasan, which for seventy-three miles presents alternately the wildest and the grandest scenery imaginable, till it culminates in the rapids and the iron gates of Roumania. Our

breath is held with suppressed excitement as our vessel with accelerated speed swishes round each stupendous headland of the river—the stream narrows in places to within one hundred and fifty yards, and attains a depth of over two hundred feet. Now we sail between lofty walls of perpendicular rock, and the dauntless spirit of ancient Rome is borne in upon us as we see the chiselled holes squarely cut in the rock, and recognise the manner in which they stayed up their improvised road for the towing of their craft and the transport of their cattle. The Danube was once the high road into Central Europe for these intrepid sons of Romulus, and a marble tablet affixed on the rocky wall about this point, intimates in words now almost effaced by time, that Trajan by this route entered upon his first Dacian campaign. In the afternoon, Orsova, the last Servian town, situated on the Roumanian frontier, was reached, and the early evening found us in a smaller steamer descending the rapids and passing through the celebrated Eisernes Thor. Well might this passage be named the Iron Gates, the defile is gloomy and threatening, black forbidding rocks, with jagged point or shelving ridge, stud the bed of the river, causing the water to divide into innumerable streams and cascades, through which, if depth of water allows, the little vessel darts and leaps in a wonderfully exciting manner. This risky method of traversing the defile is now obviated by the completion of a canal channel along the Servian bank.

The passport regulations in these Slavonic states are particularly strict. Neither steamboats, railway or diligence tickets can be obtained without its presentation, nor can you embark or disembark without the same formality. Our passport was an old Turkish one, which had been vised in Constantinople and Alexandria, and consequently of no earthly use for our present journey, but by

dint of assisting the officials in its decipherment, and ostentatiously pointing out the impressive red seal and the bold V.R. we had, without much difficulty, managed to get through so far. Our first real reverse occurred at Turn Severin, our first landing place in Roumania. The official examiners, and these are usually from four to six of the Austrian military, suspected something irregular in our documents, and detained us pending the arrival of their chief. Meanwhile darkness had come down upon the scene and the only chance of conveyance back to Orsova, where we had deposited our baggage, and where we intended to pass the night, had gone! Whilst we were chafing and smarting under these conditions, the chief at length appeared. Before him, with an air of assumed confidence, we pointed out the large star-edged seal and the regal initials, and in indignant terms demanded an explanation of our detention. In his pompous ignorance the chief saw at once that our passport was duly in order, owing to its important appearance, and reprimanding his subordinates for their stupidity, he magniloquently bowed us into restored liberty. Undismayed by the blackness of the night and the strangeness of the way, we set out upon our nine miles tramp back to Orsova. The path lay along the mountain side with the Danube thundering below, suddenly a fearful storm broke over us, the lightning almost blinded us, while the heavy rain drenched us immediately, and again and again literally washed the path from beneath our feet. We had to cross, by rude unfenced bridges, several mountain torrents swollen with the present storm. Once at the end of this path, where the land flattened out, we lost ourselves in the aisles of a field of maize. Not till two o'clock in the morning did the welcome lights of our haven of rest gleam before us.

We arose next morning little the worse for our previous

night's escapade, and emerging from the high arched gateway of the "König von Ungarn" we crossed the road and entered the hotel gardens which lay along the river front, opposite the hotel itself. Here breakfast was partaken of under delightfully alfresco conditions, listening the while to the strangely sweet music of a Zigeuner orchestra. On one side the broad river flowed like a dazzling belt of sparkling gems; on the other the stately mount Allion rose, ridge over ridge of wonderful hues, for a thousand feet, till its summit glowed clear in the deep impalpable blue of heaven. Some chance observation on the holiday-like appearance of the people reminded us that it was Sunday, and to our credit be it known, we immediately proceeded to the semi-eastern Basilica which stood in the midst of the yellow-walled cluster of houses. We fear, however, it must be confessed, that neither mental nor moral benefit resulted from our attendance at the singular and incomprehensible ceremony we found already in progress, for a number of boys, and boys will be boys all the world over, were mischievously interfering with the devotions of various of the assembly by surreptitiously poking them with short canes from the rear. Add to this the suffocating heat and an insufferably noisome atmosphere, and it will cease to be wondered at that we preferred the free, sweet air of the outside world.

By this time the main street, a wide irregular sun-baked thoroughfare, was crowded with a motley throng of Servians, Bosnians, Roumanians, and other Slav nationalities—the fearfully odd cut and colour of costume! well, who shall describe it? Some of the men, from up country, wore a species of inverted bloomers, that is, all the fullness of these nether garments appeared to be concentrated and disposed about the lower extremity of the wearer's back, which suggested an abnormal development, more

prominent than elegant. Whilst making our way through this miscellaneous concourse, we caught frequent glimpses of the interiors of the dwellings we passed. These were uniformly whitewashed and very meagrely furnished, with for the most part, unpainted furniture of the rudest kind. Apart from the usual sacred figures there seemed to be no attempt at internal decoration, except here and there a picture of some religious saint or legend, very highly coloured and very badly framed.

The day was yet early. Should we visit the famous Hercules Bad, or ascend the high vantage ground recommended for the view it affords? But no, we would devote the day to making a pilgrimage to the historic spot, situated a few miles distant, where that democratic patriot Louis Kossuth buried the ancient crown of Hungary in 1849. En route we had first of all to negotiate a long straggling market, whose main feature consisted of the huge green and yellow melons which were displayed in pyramidal piles on every hand. There were several show-booths concealing mysterious sights, sights more striking than delicate, judging from the illustrations affixed outside.

We now entered upon a long wild unkempt sort of road, with detached groves of acacia and eucalyptus on our right, between us and the Danube; and on the left unfenced fields of maize fully eight feet high. Presently we found ourselves treading the pebbled paths of a trimly-kept garden, redolent with odours of balsamic plants, bright with weigelia, and flanked with a thick dark wood. In the midst of this garden we encountered the object of our search. A small square tower-like building, completely overgrown with green and variously-tinted creepers marks the secluded spot where for four years the regal crown of Hungary remained hidden. Noble-hearted

Kossuth!—crown of passing strange vicissitudes! We try to picture the scene enacted here half-a-century ago, the champion of his nation's independence and his countrymen's emancipation from class rule, secretly burying the insignia which he believed to be inimical to the people's rights and happiness. And the crown itself—surely no stranger fate than this had ever befallen it since, nearly a thousand years ago, it was first presented to Stephen by Sylvester II.

In the evening light we sauntered back to Orsova. Seating ourselves on the deck of our steamer, for, as the boat sailed at early dawn, we were sleeping on board that night, we gave ourselves up to the dreamy beauty of the sights and sounds about us. From the recesses of an adjoining river-garden there arose the melodiously plaintive strains of Zigeuner music. At times it floated over the waters in a crescendo of wild wailing tones, then with an exquisite melancholy it would die away almost to silence, only, however, to awaken into a fresh burst of singularly bizarre sounds, carrying the mind back to long-forgotten days, and entrancing the ear with a mysterious fascination, which in memory lasted long after the actual strains had passed into stillness.

Then gradually that hush crept over the scene, which at the dying of the day so often lulls the gloaming into night. The heavens were all suffused with a saffron-coloured light, and anon the low banks of cloud which had gathered on the horizon blushed into rose-pink, flamed into fiery red, and for a minute rolled back like the opening of radiant gates, and the full glory of the setting sun blazed out, flashing splendour from point to point, then slowly paled and melted into softest shade and shadow. Of darkness there was none, only a purplish haze that stole up and up from the horizon, then gently dropped

from the zenith like a curtain of gossamer, and so came the faint ærial obscurity of the summer night, and so at this stage, with the spirit of beauty and quietness upon us we will conclude our present reminiscences of the beautiful blue Danube.

A QUATRAIN OF OMAR KHAYYAM IN RÓMANES, THE
SPEECH OF THE ENGLISH GYPSIES.

Sar Kóosi maur' akei, tale de rook,
Sar mul te pi, sar ghili-lil, ta Too
Ghilessa 'kei adré bikonyo-tem,
Ta 'konyo-tem te vela tem opré.

W. E. A. Axon
H. T. Crofton.

Here with a little bread beneath the bough,
A flask of wine, a book of verse, and Thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness—
Oh, wilderness were Paradise enow.

Ed. FitzGerald





ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

BY FREDERICK BARKER.

FEW English novelists of the present century enjoyed a wider popularity during their own lifetime than Anthony Trollope. It is doubtful whether any contemporary writer of fiction appealed to a larger audience, both in England and the United States. Certainly none with an equal degree of fame in his own generation has fallen so rapidly and so completely into oblivion. Thirty years ago when the Barsetshire series of tales was in process of publication many thousands of Trollope's novels were thrown on the literary market, not infrequently at the rate of as many as two new works in a single year, and were eagerly devoured and highly appreciated by a public that, like *Oliver Twist*, cried for more. He appealed to no particular section of public opinion, he did not write works professing to deal with a social abuse, he revealed no new phase of modern life to an audience agape for sensational realism, he wrote for the upper middle classes of the nineteenth century, about people and conditions of life they were well acquainted with, and his simple and natural English and his unaffected fidelity to human nature were sufficient to secure him an audience that never wearied. Now, within twenty years after his death, his works are

consigned to complete oblivion. The majority of the younger generation who know his name have a vague recollection that he was a desperate rider to hounds and once wrote a novel called *Barchester Towers*.

For all practical purposes he is effectually dead to the reading public, for if curiosity tempts us to make acquaintance with him we find that his novels are out of print, with the exception of *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*, which are certainly not the most pleasing from a literary point of view. To me it is, for the present, an inexplicable problem that a generation that is willing to recognize and admire the chaste and delicate beauty of *Cranford* and *Our Village* and can appreciate the humour of *Evelina* can afford to disregard the genuine humour and simple and natural pathos that are revealed in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* and in *Orley Farm* with such delicacy of touch and sureness of insight, and such painstaking fidelity to human nature.

Anthony Trollope was born in London in the year 1815. His father was one of those unfortunate men whose sole faculty seems to be that of acquiring and maintaining in the eyes of their friends and relations a reputation for general cleverness without doing anything to deserve it. At the time of the novelist's birth he was a barrister in chambers in Lincoln's Inn. He was utterly incapable of making money, and though spending little or nothing on his own pleasures he managed to dissipate all his fortune. About this time he entered on the lease of a farm near Harrow which is described by the novelist as Orley Farm in the novel of that name. It was an unfortunate speculation from beginning to end, and, as his son says, was the grave of all his hopes, ambition, and prosperity. If the poor gentleman had known any happiness in former days the future was sad enough. He tried desperately

to retrieve his fortunes without avail, and spent the end of his years in a foreign land, wretched in health and miserably depressed in mind. Before his death he wrote many volumes of an *Encyclopædia Ecclesiastica*, a work that is now forgotten and never obtained any success.

His wife, and the mother of the novelist, was in many respects a complete contrast to him. She made a journey to America in middle life with the object of retrieving the fortunes of the family by a bazaar. At Cincinnati the bazaar was built and the money embarked in the venture was lost. But this was really the salvation of the family. Mrs. Trollope wrote a book about the Americans and published it at the age of fifty. It was a forlorn hope, and it was well that it succeeded. She had never before earned a penny, but for this work she received about £800, and that almost immediately. From this time to the day of her death, which occurred at over seventy years of age, she contrived to maintain the family by her writings, and published in all 114 volumes.

Anthony Trollope was the third son of six children. His father and mother, as we have seen, were somewhat of a literary turn of mind, and his mother especially was a fertile writer. This faculty of writing easily appears to have been a family characteristic, and the novelist especially seems to glory in it. He takes credit for the fact that his own family had produced more books than any other; and he himself seems especially pleased to think that his own writings exceed in quantity those of any writer that ever lived. Voltaire and Varro and Carlyle are all weighed in the balance and found wanting. "Varro," he says, "at the age of eighty had written 480 volumes." But volumes in Varro's time were not what they are in the nineteenth century, and in conclusion there was always the saving clause that Voltaire and Varro and

Carlyle were dead and could write no more, while Trollope was living still. The method of writing adopted by Trollope was quite in conformity with this spirit as will shortly be seen.

His schooldays, he tells us, were most unhappy. He first went to Harrow at the age of seven, and was afterwards sent to Winchester. He tells us he was perpetually in disgrace. "I feel convinced in my own mind," he says, "that I have been flogged oftener than any human being alive. It was just possible to obtain five scourgings in one day at Winchester, and I have often boasted that I obtained them all."

On leaving school at the age of nineteen he tried for a sizarship at Clare Hall, and again for a scholarship at Trinity, Oxford, but each time without success. Finally, after a year as an usher at Brussels, he was drafted into a clerkship at the General Post Office, and remained in the service of the Government for thirty-three years.

In his post-office career there is one feature that is significant with regard to his subsequent work as a man of letters. It was part of his duty to write reports on matters connected with his department, and the composition of these was always a matter of special pride with him. Nothing was suffered to leave his hands unless it was as perfect as he could make it. Simplicity of expression was the first object, and he invariably made a point of using the purest and simplest English. It was also his special aim to cultivate the habit of expressing himself without the necessity for rough copies. No small part of his extraordinary facility in writing may be traced to this self-imposed training in the General Post Office, and perhaps from a literary point of view it is the most noteworthy feature of his work as a public servant.

He underwent an examination before he entered the

service, and this would appear to have been as much of a farce as his previous schooling. For an account of this incident we are referred to Charley Tudor's examination in the novel he afterwards wrote called *The Three Clerks*. After seven years of drudgery in the London office he obtained a post as assistant surveyor in Ireland, and from that time his prosperity was assured. He was not only easy in his circumstances but enjoyed exceptional facilities for seeing the world, and these he was ready to take advantage of. For six-and-twenty years he had been miserable, enslaved as it were, and poverty stricken. Now had come the turning point in his life. And, in truth, his unhappiness was not discreditable to him. We have seen that his mother was a fertile writer. His brother was earning money by his pen, and his sister had written a novel. Trollope was longing to try his hand, yet could not set himself seriously to the task.

He tells us he was sure he could write a novel. He felt if he once settled down to work there was a career before him, yet his work for the post office was in the way, and two professions at once might be too hard for him. One of the characteristic features in Trollope's books is their common sense, and the same quality is apparent in his ambition. He never seems to have fancied himself a genius. He did not spend his youth or his early manhood in wondering what posterity would choose to say of him. We hear no murmurings about his name being writ in water or shining on the forehead of the age to come. In fact he aspired to nothing sublimely great: but he did wish to be rather more than a clerk in the Post Office. He felt it was owing to his self respect to impress his individuality on his fellow men. He wished to be known as Anthony Trollope in short. In London he hated the office, and hated the life of idleness he was leading.

There seemed no possibility of a career before him. Parliament and the bar were out of question. In official life there was no prospect of real success, though latterly the prospect was much improved. Poetry, he confesses, was above his reach, the drama was equally beyond his powers, for history or biography, or for essay writing, he was not sufficiently learned. But he thought it was possible to write a novel, and in this shape the effort was to be made.

The practice of weaving stories in his own mind had long been a favourite with him. Referring to the loneliness of his early life he says, "Study was not my bent, and I could not please myself by being all idle. Thus it came to pass that I was always going about with some castle in the air within my mind For weeks, for months, if I remember rightly from year to year, I would carry on the same tale, binding myself down to certain laws, to certain proportions, and proprieties and unities. Nothing impossible was ever introduced, nor even anything which from outward circumstances would seem to be violently improbable. I, myself, was of course my own hero. Such is a necessity of castle building. But I never became a king or a duke, much less when my height and personal appearance were fixed could I be an Antinous or six feet high. I never was a learned man, nor even a philosopher. But I was a very clever person, and beautiful young women used to be fond of me, and I strove to be kind of heart, and open of hand, and noble in thought, despising mean things, and altogether I was a very much better fellow than I have ever succeeded in being since."

All this was a good preparation for story telling, yet, even in Ireland, the work was not begun without some delay. But the time of the new departure was near at hand, and the scene of his first story was laid in Ireland.

Wandering about the little village of Drumsna, on the usual routine of his Post Office work, he conceived the plot of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, and set to work immediately on his first novel. This was finished and published in due course, and was an absolute failure.

He tells us he expected no more than this, and he produced another work in the following year, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, another Irish tale, and as absolute a failure as the preceding one. The immediate success that his mother enjoyed was certainly not to be his, and in fact he repeatedly tells us that at this time he had no hope at all of succeeding. His publisher had written a polite letter with a statement of the loss he had sustained by the publication, and a gratuitous piece of advice to abstain in the future from novel writing.

This was not encouraging to the author. The wisdom of the advice he dared not question. Nay, so far did he concur with it that he himself would have bet heavily against his own success, but by continuing he could only lose pen and paper, and the twentieth chance might turn up in his favour he thought.

This was in 1848, and Trollope was thirty-three years of age. It was not until five years later that he began *The Warden*, which was really the foundation of his success. A few months after *The Warden* was published he received the first instalment of his literary earnings: it was a cheque for £9 8s. 8d., and he truly says that stone breaking would have been more profitable. But the tide had turned. From now to the end of his life his works were looked for eagerly both by public and publishers, and when he died at the age of sixty-seven he had published about three score novels in all, and for these he received about £70,000.

Such from a pecuniary point of view was the measure of his success, and no one could say he had not deserved it.

I have said *The Warden* was the commencement of Trollope's success, but it was more than this. It was the first of a wonderful series of novels which, when everything else he has written has been forgotten, will continue to hold a place of its own in literature. There are half-a-dozen novels dealing with *Barsetshire*, and the same places and characters are more or less common to all of them. The series comprises the following:—*The Warden*, *Barchester Towers*, *Dr. Thorne*, *Framley Parsonage*, *The Small House at Allington*, and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, at the close of which Trollope gives his readers to understand that they will be troubled with *Barsetshire* no more. If to these we add *Orley Farm* and *Phineas Finn* we have all of Trollope's work that is really good. For my own part I should place *The Last Chronicle* as the best of all, with a possible rival in *Orley Farm*. These are the works on which he founds his claim to rank as a writer of English fiction, and indeed if he had written no more than these his position would doubtless be higher to day than it is.

The Warden was originally conceived at Salisbury, and doubtless while staying in the Cathedral City Trollope observed just sufficient of clerical ways to assist in the effort of moral consciousness which was afterwards responsible for the Archdeacon.

As to *Barsetshire* itself we have little knowledge, save the evidence that the novels themselves afford us. To Trollope himself not only the characters, but this new shire he had added to the English counties, was as real and substantial as his own home. "I had it all in my mind," he says, "its roads and railroads, its towns and

parishes, its members of Parliament, and the different hunts which rode over it. I knew all the great Lords and their castles, the squires and their parks, the rectors and their churches." He made a map of the district he tells us. "Throughout these stories there has been no name given to a fictitious site which does not represent to me a spot of which I know all the accessories as though I had lived and wandered there."

The Warden was the first of Trollope's novels in which a special study is made of clerical characters. His original intention in writing the book however had little to do with the personality of the clerical world. A good deal of attention had been drawn to the fact that endowments originally entrusted to the Church for the relief of the poor had gradually been perverted to the creation of sinecures for Church dignitaries. Several peculiarly flagrant cases had recently been exposed. In Trollope's eyes the grievance was just, and required an immediate remedy. But he was also impressed by another injustice, less readily apparent though none the less painful to those concerned. The recipients of the incomes in question had for the most part accepted the sinecures in good faith, and in many cases probably as a reward for past services. But the newspapers that entered on the crusade were remorseless in their treatment of these gentlemen, who were certainly not the chief sinners in the matter, and for the most part were guilty of no more than their own good fortune. Trollope attempted in *The Warden* to give an account of the actual facts of the case on behalf of the poor who had been defrauded, and also to create a favourable impression of the reverend gentlemen who were the cause of so much injustice.

Whether he succeeded or not can hardly concern us now. That he did succeed in portraying a Cathedral city, and

the very root and essence of clerical life, will hardly admit of dispute, I think.

In attempting to estimate Trollope's work it is perhaps a little difficult at the outset to detach from the quality of the work itself what we know of his method of doing it. The sincerity and candour of the *Autobiography* are by no means the least pleasing features of that delightful book, but it would probably have been better for some reasons had the author been a little more reticent as to his manner of working.

We think none the less of a man's work if we know that it cometh of prayer and fasting, and the method of working adopted by Trollope is hardly the method approved of genius. A little diary was ruled off at the commencement of each new novel, and in this was entered day after day, and week by week, the number of pages written, so that if ever a day passed without work being done the record of his shortcoming was before his eyes. A week with an insufficient number of pages was as a blister to his eye, and a month so irretrievably disgraced would have been a sorrow to his heart. Times and seasons he successfully set at naught. For years he wrote fiction for two or three hours a day, in addition to his work for the General Post Office, which he truthfully says was never in the slightest degree neglected, and over and above all this he contributed to various periodicals. To do this he sat down to write with unfailing regularity at 5.30 every morning, and wrote till 8 o'clock.

In the train every day, and on sea voyages, he had tablet and pencil ever at hand, and nothing was suffered to interfere. Waiting for a favourable mood was a thing unknown to him; the fact of his seating himself to write caused the stream to flow, and if he only sat long enough it flowed without pause till the work was done—the cob-

bler's wax on his seat was what made him succeed, he said. "To me," he adds, "it would not be more absurd if a shoemaker were to wait for inspiration, or the tallow chandler for the divine moment of melting."

There are those who will shake their heads at this naive confession. It may possibly call to mind the easy writing that Sheridan found was so often such "d——d hard reading," but after all there is the writing that comes easily after long and patient striving after perfection, and Trollope had striven patiently all his life.

"True ease in writing comes by art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance."

And whatever the faults we may find in Trollope—and he is not without them—his facility in writing is never the ease of a slovenly diction; defects of style and even of grammar we find occasionally, but these are by no means sufficiently frequent to seriously mar his writings.

He is never ambitious of being a stylist. With Trollope "the play is the thing"—every story that is human is a good story, and he has only to tell it naturally to tell it well. His plots are neither intricate nor elaborate, yet for all that they are interesting and ingenious. There is nothing sensational in any of them; the temptations and perplexities of his characters are perfectly ordinary—in *Framley Parsonage*, in *Barchester Towers*, in *The Small House at Allington*, and in *Doctor Thorne*, there is nothing that does not happen in every day life; yet all of these are of a really absorbing interest. In the two best of his novels, *Orley Farm* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, the plots are more sensational, yet even here the probabilities are strictly observed from beginning to end. As a matter of fact his plots were hardly so much the result of construction as of develop-

ment. I should say, indeed, that very few English novelists have troubled themselves so little in this respect. But for all that, his plots are carefully and artistically worked out with just sufficient romance to make them interesting, and with a sense of proportion that makes them reasonable.

It may be objected by critics of Trollope's work that his books are deficient in local colour, that his figures are placed on a background too carelessly drawn. And this to a certain extent is undoubtedly true. He was lacking, if not in a sense of the picturesque, at least in that intimate sympathy with Nature and natural loveliness that we accustom ourselves to look for in all our novelists. He could imagine a scene and place it before the reader with a degree of minuteness that is almost photographic in its realism, but he did *not* delight to dwell on the beauties of Nature. There are no studies of still life in all his novels. His descriptions are interesting and realistic, but are seldom the work of a poet's mind.

With Trollope the artist is always a student of men and women. One of his best works he has called a chronicle, and the word is most expressive to my mind of the prevailing characteristic of all his work. More than in any of his contemporaries, almost more than is the case even with Jane Austen, the men and women in his tales and their doings and sayings are the beginning and the end of his moral purpose.

The saving quality of his work is undoubtedly his knowledge of human nature. His intimate acquaintance with the inner life of every profession and cult of polite society is almost miraculous. The Church from the bishop to the bishop's chaplain, the Bar and the lawyer and the lawyer's clerk, from the tradesman and the traveller in the commercial room to the squire and the landlord

aristocrat—all these are portrayed in his social dramas with an intuitive perception that never fails, and with sufficient attention to detail to be absolutely life-like and realistic. His sketches of clergymen are acknowledged masterpieces. Surely the strength and the weakness of the clerical nature, its greatness and its littleness, its wisdom and its foolishness (if I may be pardoned for hinting at such a thing), were never depicted with such insight into character, with such inimitable skill, and with such playful, though at times a little malicious, humour.

He tells us he has often been asked by his readers when he lived so long in a cathedral city, as he must have done to obtain such a knowledge of clerical ways, and he says what we know to be perfectly true, that he never lived in any cathedral city, save the city of London, and never was intimate with clerical society at all. Yet the bishop and the chaplain and the precentor and the archdeacon all stand out from the canvas with so much realism, and are so thoroughly imbued and inspired with the clerical air, and surrounded with the atmosphere of a cathedral close that criticism is defied.

Archdeacon Grantley, he says in his autobiography, was the result of an effort of moral consciousness. "It was such as that in my opinion that an archdeacon should be, or at any rate, would be with such advantages as an archdeacon might have, and lo! an archdeacon was produced who has been declared by competent authorities to be a real archdeacon down to the very ground."

What is most of all conspicuous in Trollope's characters is their absolute realism. We have no model heroes in these novels of his—none of those personifications of all the virtues that shine forth from the pages of some of his contemporaries with such unnatural lustre.

We have very few scoundrels of the deepest dye and very few heroes or heroines who are quite immaculate. I do not think that in all his novels there is a single prig. On the other hand there are plenty of real men and women, natural in their faults and in their shortcomings, and thoroughly human too in their good qualities.

A noteworthy characteristic of the Barsestshire series is the gradual development of the characters that are more or less common to all these tales. Archdeacon Grantley and the Proudies and Mr. Harding appear in nearly all of the half-dozen novels that form the series, and in reintroducing these characters Trollope has been wonderfully successful in portraying the developments and modifications of character that are naturally the result of a lapse of time.

Archdeacon Grantley in *The Last Chronicle* is precisely what the Archdeacon of *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* must inevitably become in his later days; and the Proudies and Mr. Harding are no less inevitable and convincing. I think this has been done throughout all the series with an exceptional degree of skill, and a wonderful knowledge of human nature.

He has carried his realism so far that some may accuse him of being tedious. To these I would simply reply that those who are not attracted by art in fiction, as contrasted with mere sensation, are likely to find him tedious. For example, to instance another writer; when Mr. Woodhouse, in Jane Austen's novel says of the housemaid Jane, "Whenever I see her, she always courtesies and asks me how I do in a very pretty manner, and when you have had her here to do needle work I observe she always turns the lock of the door the right way, and never bangs it." This is not very exciting or very novel. It introduces us to no phase of life we are unacquainted with—it is part of

a very ordinary conversation—but it is humorous by virtue of its truth to an ordinary type of life, and we are attracted by the character of Mr. Woodhouse by virtue of those very qualities which interest us in the company at The Rainbow Inn, and I will venture to add in that at Gatherum Castle or Framley Parsonage.

In attempting to estimate Trollope's work I have laid special emphasis on this point. For I believe that in this respect he is quite unique.

There are many qualities desirable in a novelist that we look for in vain throughout his pages. His descriptions of natural scenery are almost inventories—his philosophy is no more than the knowledge of good and evil that belongs to every sensible man of the world who has lived and thought, but his knowledge of human nature never fails him.

His characters are portraits of men and women as real as though actually endowed with life. In this respect they rank with Mrs. Poyser and Colonel Newcome and Mr. Woodhouse, and if not in the very front rank are at least in the highest school in the art of portraiture. It is hardly too much to say that no one in any of Trollope's books ever does or says anything but just what such persons would do or say in the circumstances they are placed in. This is the peculiar triumph of Trollope, and I doubt whether any other novelist is quite equal to him in this respect.

A prominent feature in Trollope's work is his intimate sympathy with all his characters. This it is which has enabled him to portray with a degree of perspicuity that is unerring, and with a sense of proportion that never fails him, not only the doings and sayings, but the mental agitations of all his characters. His insight into the innermost workings of minds essentially different from

his own, is one of the most curious phenomena in English literature. There is no more emphatic testimony to this feature of his genius than the characters of his heroines. Mr. Frederic Harrison has expressed himself on this point, and I cannot do better than quote his words:—

In the centre of almost every tale we are taken to the heart of a spotless, loving, refined, brave English girl. In nothing does Anthony Trollope delight more than when he unveils to us the secret thoughts of a noble-hearted maiden who loves strongly, but who has a spirit as strong as her love, a clear brain and a pure will. In nothing is he more successful; nowhere is he more subtle, more true, more interesting. In this fine gift he surpasses all his contemporaries, and almost all other English novelists. Mary Thorne, Lily Dale, Lucy Roberts—I would almost add Martha Dunstable—may not be heroines of romance, and are certainly not great creations. But they are pure, right minded, delicate, brave women; and it does one good to be admitted to the sacred confessional of their hearts. . . .

The subtle touches with which we are admitted to their meditations, the delicate weighing of competing counsels and motives, the living pulses of heart and brain, and the essential soundness and reality of the mental and moral crisis—are all told with an art that may be *beneath* that of Jane Austen, but which certainly is akin to hers, and has the same quality of pure and simple human nature. Pure and simple human nature is, for the moment, out of fashion as the subject of modern romance. But it remains a curious problem how the boisterous, brawny, thick-skinned lump of humanity whom we knew as Anthony Trollope ever came to conceive so many delicate and sensitive country maidens, and to see so deeply and so truly into the heart of their maiden meditations.

I have hinted that if Trollope had written less, his name would stand higher than it does at present. As a matter of fact, I suppose we should judge of a man's genius rather by the best he has done, than by the average merit of all his work. But the public is not so careful to discriminate, and after all, there is a certain amount of justice in the Nemesis that insists on a penalty for inordinate pot boiling. Much of Trollope's work is confessedly mediocre. Most of his tales are interesting, and without being in any degree remarkable, his style is invariably simple, pellucid and graceful; but, while

nothing he has written is in any degree unnatural or affected, many of his books are somewhat lacking in vitality, and in the absolute realism that is the prevailing characteristic of his best work. The characters fail to impress or even to greatly interest us. They are merely piece work.

One virtue there is, however, even in his least satisfactory work. His books always leave a pleasant taste in the mouth. The natural bias of his mind was essentially manly and straightforward. He was a healthy and right-minded Englishman, and without being a propagandist in any sense of the word; without preaching for an instant, or even seeming to do so, his books, from beginning to end, are characterised by a moral tone, that is in itself an agreeable and health-giving tonic.

This will apply to every word that he ever wrote. But the six works comprised in the Barsetshire series, and in addition to these *Orley Farm* are capable of being put to a severer test.

There is real creative power in *The Last Chronicle*. The character of Josiah Crawley is undoubtedly the greatest creation of Trollope, and is an absolute masterpiece. Some of the scenes in which the agony and despair of the unfortunate clergyman whom misery and want and ambition persistently frustrated, have driven to the verge of insanity, and even at times a little beyond the verge, are really fine tragedy—these scenes are quite beyond anything else in any of Trollope's books, and are almost, if not quite, equal to the one or two scenes of a similar kind in Thackeray.

There is other work too of an exquisite quality in *The Last Chronicle*. The tale of the last days of Mr. Harding is none the less moving because the pathos is never in the slightest degree exaggerated, and the scenes between Lily

Dale and her mother are as touching for the same quality of unaffected and simple pathos as anything in *Esmond* or *Vanity Fair*; while the feelings of the Bishop on Mrs. Proudie's death, and the first meeting of Grace Crawley and the Archdeacon, partake of the finest and most delicate qualities, both of humour and pathos.

Though undoubtedly containing his finest work, when considered as a novel, *The Last Chronicle* is in many respects inferior to *Orley Farm*.

It is undoubtedly faulty in construction, it is rather too long drawn out, and some of the best and most exquisitely written scenes—notably those between Lily Dale and her mother before referred to—are connected with the main story by almost too slight a thread. The episodes too of Mrs. Dobbs Broughton, and the Van Sievers are sometimes a little tedious. They are by no means in Trollope's best style of humour, and we feel that "the clowns speak more than is set down for them." The central figure in the story is a little obscured by these numerous side lights, and the dramatic simplicity and continuity of the tale is a trifle impeded. But in spite of its faults *The Last Chronicle* has indisputable literary merit of a high order, and the character of Josiah Crawley is of itself sufficient to insure for it a permanent place among English novels.

I am not attempting to claim for the works of Trollope that they reach the sublime heights of grandeur or pathos or even of humour. His genius was intensely sympathetic rather than creative in the highest sense of the word. He undoubtedly lacked the higher imaginative faculty that is the primary essential of the great novelist, but he possessed an intuitive perception into the minds and the hearts of his fellow-men, an astonishing faculty of observation, a retentive memory, and a sympathetic quality of

mind which if not the highest gifts in a novelist, are an excellent substitute for them.

His area is undoubtedly somewhat limited. For the most part he restricts himself to half-a-dozen shires of his native country and to the gentlemen and gentlewomen of the nineteenth century. This was a necessity of his genius and indeed his success was in no small measure a result of his limitation in this respect. He was essentially and always a man of the world, and shared to the fullest extent of his headstrong impulsive nature the life that was all around him. Thoroughly in sympathy himself with the contemporary life of his social peers he wisely restricted himself for the most part to the range of his own experience. *In* the world and essentially *of* the world he has painted a phase of life he was thoroughly familiar with, and this, if no more than this, he has done with complete success.

He was certainly more than a mere copyist. Within his own limited sphere his insight was unerring and universal. The innermost circles of all professions with all their shibboleths were alike familiar to him, and neither age nor sex was a barrier to his unerring perspicuity, and his exact and minute faculty of human portraiture.

None of his own contemporaries is quite on a level with him here, though many undoubtedly possessed a more extensive range of vision. In Thackeray, in George Eliot, and in Charles Dickens we search in vain for contemporary portraits of men and women as minutely and absolutely realistic as those of Trollope.

Indeed it may ultimately be to this that he will owe an enduring place in English literature. He is an accurate historian of his own time, and whatever the literary merits of such may be they possess an undoubted and permanent value. When all the historians of the eighteenth century have passed away Henry Fielding's work will remain as it

is now, our most valuable impression of the social complexion of his own time, and of a large and important section of English society; in the nineteenth century there is no record so faithful and so complete as we find in the pages of Trollope's novels.

I am tempted to think that a final estimate will place him on a level with Jane Austen as her legitimate and lineal successor as the social historian of his own time.





THE ENORMITY OF FICTION.

BY J. D. ANDREW.

OF all the classes of literature fiction is by far the largest and has the greatest number of readers; it is the most remunerative to the author and the least remunerative to the reader. The claim of this enormity—in its overweening monstrosity the Arthur Orton of letters—to a pre-eminent position cannot be ignored, and demands the serious consideration of all who have at heart the welfare of contemporary literature.

Out of 22,327 volumes contained in one of the Manchester Lending Libraries, provided by the fostering care of the civic fathers as “a collection fairly representing modern literature,” Fiction amounts to 33·3 per cent., or about as much as Theology, Philosophy, Politics, History, Biography, and Travels lumped together.

Yet although 33 per cent. is, one would have thought, a sufficient provision, the voracious appetite of the novel-reader far exceeds that proportion, and we find that of the books actually issued no less than 81·5 per cent. are works of Fiction. Of the novels in stock Miss Worboise is in the front rank with forty-six, Miss Annie Swann has thirty-six, Mrs. Henry Wood thirty, Miss Braddon fifty-six, and other powerful lady authors swell the wishy-washy flood.

The catalogue of the Manchester Athenæum is an even more melancholy study. The rule seems to be to add to the shelves of these circulating libraries nearly every new novel—good, bad, or indifferent—on the principle one surmises that “a book’s a book, although there’s nothing in it.” The authors who contribute one or more novels to the permanent catalogue of the Athenæum are no fewer than six hundred in number, five hundred of whom, at the most favourable estimate, are altogether beneath criticism.

In addition to Fiction in the book form, there is a large and ever-increasing quantity published in magazines and weekly serials, and even in our newspapers, besides a host of penny and halfpenny novelettes, as they are styled—the term brings to mind those other rubbishy works of fiction, “flannelette” and “linenette”—of which there are published weekly over thirty, one firm putting forth six. A recent writer in “Blackwood,” while ridiculing this penny fiction, congratulates us that at any rate it is not vicious, conceding which does not debar us, nevertheless, from condemning it as nonsense—and pernicious nonsense, too.

In “The Author” for March, 1893, may be seen a comparative table of the literary output in 1800 and in 1893 respectively, which is full of matter for serious thought. It is there estimated that the population of the three kingdoms, together with the English readers in India and the colonies, has quadrupled during this century. The total output of books in 1800 was 665, in 1893 3,648, *i.e.*, five times as great. Now one might expect that the various classes of literature would increase in something like a corresponding ratio, but the figures are startling. Political and Social Economy is no larger, Poetry and the Drama only half as large again, Medicine and Law only twice as

large, Science and Art only two-and-a-half times, Theology five-and-a-half times, History and Biography five-and-a-half times, Education eleven-and-a-half times, Voyages and Travels twelve-and-a-half times, and Fiction no less than twenty-five times, *i.e.*, from 46 in 1800 to 1,147 in 1893!

The anomalous fertility of Fiction in a matter-of-fact age and the avidity of its readers can only be accounted for by regarding it as the requirement of an overworked humanity, which, seeking solace from its weariness, flies to this literary dram-drinking for relief.

The history of its growth from comparative insignificance to the rank luxuriance of our day is at once interesting and instructive.

But to trace its development from primitive rudiments—to discuss the Milesian Tales of ancient Greece, the Arabian Nights, or the equally delectable Fabliaux, Nouvelles, and Romances of the Middle Ages, would be foreign to my intention. Nay, even Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe are excluded, for it is Fiction as we know it, the modern English novel, which I have in view—its preponderance and its value. Our modern novel differs from the romance or story of adventure by its exacting that the incidents and scenery shall be subservient to, and, as it were revolve round, a central interest—the lives and adventures of the hero and heroine. An underplot is allowable, but great care must be taken to keep it duly subordinate, as also to guard against the hero and heroine being overshadowed by any minor character—as on the stage the star must outshine everyone else, even the comic man, or the result is failure. Accepting this definition then, “Pamela” would seem to have been our earliest novel. According to Brewer it was Richardson’s finest, but surely the ill-fated Clarissa Harlowe is to be preferred to that designing baggage who

played her cards so skillfully. But we are indebted to "Pamela" for Fielding's "Joseph Andrews," and, I suppose, to the immaculate "Sir Charles Grandison" for the naughty but delightful fellow "Tom Jones."

It is not necessary to dwell upon the old-fashioned fiction so much beloved by our great-grandfathers; it is too minute in analysis, too elaborate in description, too ponderous in style, and altogether too long-winded to suit the readers of to-day. The immortal "Tom Jones" is caviare to the general, and even Miss Austen's exquisite work finds but few to read it, just as the delicate Bohea which delighted our grandmothers is rejected by their grandchildren in favour of a stronger brew.

But Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto," Mrs. Radcliffe's "Mysteries of Udolpho," and Miss Reeve's "Old English Baron" still hold their sway in out-of-the-way places, such as the dales of Yorkshire, if no where else.

That class of novel which may be called "The Creepy" has always a vogue. It thrives on spectres and mysterious midnight visitants from another world, when the taper burns blue and the faithful hound bristles with terror as the ghost in armour clumps along the corridor. Like the fat boy in "Pickwick" the author "wants to make your flesh creep"—and he does. Then, again, there is "The Blood Curdler," which reveals in all its horror some terrible crime, if not a whole batch of them. This kind abounds in bloody stains on the oaken floor, and secret underground passages communicating with the far distance, along which generations of villains have crept stealthily. It tells you of wretched nuns walled up alive, of wicked monks and tyrannical priests. There is always, somewhere about, a grisly skeleton, or what Mr. Mantalini would call "a dem'd, damp, moist, unpleasant body."

That well-known class "The Thriller" enjoys great

popularity, and includes, it must be admitted, some of the very finest work. It is essential that the end of each chapter should make you long to read the next, and in its serial form this is exasperating. The captive hero is lying on his wretched pallet in a foul dungeon beneath the moat, when the massive oaken door slowly revolves on its hinges and a masked and hooded figure enters. "'Edward,' says a sepulchral voice,"—and then, "to be continued in our next."

Or another, which gives what a chess player might describe as a double check. A lovely maiden is peacefully reposing in her chamber in the barbican tower of her sire's hoary castle overhanging the blue Mediterranean. Serene as its placid water beneath the summer sun is the maiden's slumber, but rude and rough as its storm-torn wave is the onset of Rudolph the Reckless with his lawless band. Rushing in tumultuous triumph up the secret staircase, the entrance to which had been revealed to them by a treacherous varlet, they overpower the warders. But just as Rudolph himself has reached the top step and is but a few paces from the defenceless damsel, his leg is pulled by a strange hand and he falls heavily on the stone floor. But here it is necessary that we should narrate how matters have fared with trusty old Roger and recount the strange adventure which befell him on his escape—"to be continued in our next." Here, you see, you are left wondering who pulled his leg, what will be the upshot, and what the dickens has been happening to old Roger.

But all this hectoring—this rough and tumble swash-buckler work—doesn't suit everybody, and Bottom, the weaver of fiction, adapts himself to his audience. If the lion's roar affright them he will roar as gently as any sucking dove, and so we get the "Cooing" novel with its story of the gentle loves of Edwin and Angelina—its

sugar and spice, and all that's nice. Also the "Society" novel where, moving in the upper circles, you dwell in marble halls, and "all is gas and gaiters"; the "Goody-goody," through which, as the Californian complained of Boston, "respectability stalks unchecked," and the innocent domestic story where Charlie's chilblains are touched with a tender pathos.

Very different is "The Shocker," usually a feminine product, in which each "lydie" seems endeavouring to go one better than her predecessor. The masculine article is called a "Hill-top" novel, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, because its author delights in diving into the depths. Sometimes this sort of thing is called a "Problem" novel, why, goodness knows! and silly readers are perturbed by doubts as to whether black is really black, and if after all Messalina was not a model woman, much misunderstood by an unsympathetic world. The charitable critic cannot believe that the ladies and gentlemen who produce this stuff are in sober earnest, and is disposed to excuse their naughtiness, as Hookham Frere did Landor's immorality on the ground that it was

" Mere imaginary classicality,
Wholly devoid of criminal reality."

But the varieties of novels are too numerous to be reviewed in order: the historical novel, usually quite unhistorical, and too often, like Falstaff, "blasted with antiquity"; the military, often by a lady; the naval, by a landsman; the adventurous, by a stay-at-home; the kail yard novel, the idyllic, and a host of others crowd upon us, some to be thrown aside with contempt, others to be treasured in our hearts as the dearest of friends. Who does not love Scott, and Thackeray, and Dickens? Nor can we forget Marryat and Lever, Lytton, Trollope,

Eliot, and Reade, while how much does this generation owe to Meredith and Hardy, to Stevenson and Barrie, and a score more whose ready pens and fertile brains have laboured to entertain us?

One has to complain, however, that just as there are specks on the sun so even the standard novelist has his faults. Sometimes (tell it not in Gath!) he is downright ungrammatical. Frequently his language is slipshod beyond endurance; he makes ducks and drakes of hard historical facts, and his ignorance of ecclesiology and divinity is lamentable. He forgets what he has written in preceding chapters, and stultifies himself deplorably in consequence. He sets a universe revolving on nothing, and carefully avoids the obvious in order to provide a quantum of complication. He dishes up for you unreal characters in impossible scenes, unutterable ideas in unspeakable language, while too often his religious sentiment is silly and his morality muddy. On occasion, to the grief of his admirers, he even wallows in the mire.

But despite all criticism and hypercriticism, when such men as Darwin and Ruskin are included amongst its adherents it were idle to decry Fiction, even if the censor himself were free from its fascination. Whether for good or evil it has become a part of our life, and has a special and undoubted value as an alleviator of care, a relief from actuality, and an easy exercise of the imaginative faculty. But it should be kept in subjection. The reader who reads nothing but fiction—and how many such there are!—is like the schoolboy who spends all his money at the tuck-shop on indigestible pastry and innutritious lollipops. Not only should moderation be observed, but care should be taken to read only good fiction. And here we come upon the crux of the whole matter, for how is one to decide what is good and what is bad fiction?

Some few years ago there was an interesting discussion of the question in Longman's Magazine, in which Messrs. Besant, James, and Stevenson took part. Besant insists that Fiction is one of the fine arts, and that its laws are as precise and exact as the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion. He says the novelist must write from experience, his characters must be real, not caricatured, but clear in outline, that he should possess a good style, have a conscious moral purpose, and, above all, a good story to tell. James demurs to much of this, and points out that observation is of more importance than experience, a view which seems confirmed by Trollope's success in depicting dukes and bishops, although he had never associated with such people. But when James concludes that the only condition attaching to the composition of the novel is that it be interesting, although fortified in this by Scott's dictum that the main thing is the author should not be wearisome, he is laying down a proposition open to much objection. Surely more is requisite than the power of interesting. The depraved reader may find absorbing interest in the lubricity of a Reynolds, the errand boy in Claude Duval or Deadwood Dick, the philistine in Mrs. Henry Wood, and the simpleton in Miss Worboise, but for all that the authors, though mighty interesting to such readers, are hardly "standard" novelists. If I may suggest a slight addition to a manifestly imperfect definition, I would modify it thus: the essential of a good novel is that it should be interesting to *men of culture*. For, after all, the matured judgment of the cultured mind is the touchstone of literature, against which there is no appeal. Mere popularity, whether temporary or of long standing, is no criterion of merit. Neither a notorious name nor a powerful puff, nor an enormous edition can succeed in placing a bad book upon the enduring rolls of fame, and

hundreds that are now the sensation of a week will in days to come find their place in that limbo of forgetfulness, the twopenny box.

But this one fact stares us in the face: Fiction—and it may be added, such fiction!—is paramount. Poetry and the Drama are, comparatively speaking, nowhere. We can agree with Mr. Goschen when he says that “the faculty of wise, sympathetic, disciplined, prospective imagination is one of the most precious faculties which providence has imparted in the human breast”; but we may ask how much—or rather, how little—of modern fiction conforms to his limitations. “Wise,”—“disciplined,”—are surely the very last adjectives one would think of applying to the bulk of it.

And here may it not be also asked, without detracting in the slightest from the claims of the imagination, if readers, especially those who aspire to be men of letters, are not too apt to forget that we live, and move, and have our being in a world of hard reality, and that imagination, though possessing a certain value, will not pay a man's bills, nor help him to make a living, to do his duty to his neighbour, or to save his soul alive.

I am aware that such a question must be put with bated breath and humble submissiveness, lest the keen inquisitors who rule literature find excuse for charging me with taking a heterodox view and offending against the canons of authority. But, however that may be, one will, I hope, be safe in saying that the excessive amount of fiction written and read in these days is a regrettable fact calling for the serious consideration of all who wish well to literature. Whether or not it is remediable is a matter upon which opinions may differ, but much of the evil surely might be lessened if those who have the control of our lending libraries would exercise more discretion

in the selection of novels. As I have remarked, the practice seems to be to add to the shelves every work written by certain authors as soon as it comes out, without regard to its literary merits, and so it happens that we have millions of readers who have never read any of the masters of fiction. The other day I heard of a gentleman who read nothing but Mrs. Wood's novels, which he is just now going through for the fifth time. That our librarians are alive to the evil is shown by their congratulations whenever a slight decrease in the issue of fiction is manifested; but this is not sufficient. If the authorities who are responsible for the mental pabulum so freely spread before readers desire to be free from the accusation of debilitating the public taste they must discontinue setting before it in such profusion the seductive sweetstuff which lures the young and the foolish from a healthier diet. It is, however, not so much the quantity as the quality which is objectionable. If the 33 per cent. provided were composed of standard fiction the 81 per cent. issued would though still excessive, not be so deplorable; but when we consider that the greater part of the issue is either misty moonshine or feeble fiddle-faddle, we arrive at the conclusion that this provision for the imaginative faculty is a very doubtful boon indeed.

Besides the check which librarians might give by judicious weeding and limited purchase, critics and reviewers might aid by exercising a sterner censorship than they are wont to do. No doubt hundreds of novels are published at the writer's risk, but no one is bound to buy them, and, least of all, the librarians. One way or another it is easily practicable to reduce the output of fiction within reasonable bounds, and divert its insatiate devourers to fairer fields and pastures new.

Against good fiction I have not a word to say, and,

indeed, for me—an inveterate novel-reader, to whom it has given so many pleasant hours, affording not only pleasure but profit—to disparage it would be base ingratitude. But I sometimes doubt whether it has not kept me from better things. Whether the reading of Milton's "Paradise Lost," or of Stevenson's "Treasure Island" is the more profitable to the imaginative faculty I cannot say, but I am certain which is the more tempting; while a funny story by Mr. Jacobs would, I fear, draw me away from a sonnet by Mr. Stansfield, and a new romance by Mr. Weyman be more tempting than an excursion with Wordsworth. But I should despise myself if I were capable of gormandizing upon the husks of a Wood or revelling on the cheap champagne of a Braddon, and would rather sit down to the painful perusal of a directory, or even one of Dean Farrar's works, than occupy my time with the puerilities of those lady novelists who fill so many yards of shelving in our libraries. For while high-class fiction is perhaps the finest form of imaginative writing, low-class fiction is the most contemptible of all ink-slinging and paper-staining. In the former the mind is captivated by intelligent and interesting studies of character, by keen observation, picturesque description, and thrilling incidents—all set forth with a rare felicity of expression and adorned with pregnant wit and lofty sentiments. But in the latter we have dished up a farrago of nonsense—a gallimaufry of gibberish. Sometimes it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing; sometimes a string of empty platitudes, alternating with silly sentiments and foolish precepts, stretched like a suburban clothes-line across a dreary waste of commonplace. The characters are senseless puppets, the scenery a succession of daubs, the incidents either wildly improbable or tamely trite.

Of the men, women, and children living in this enlightened age, the great majority practically read nothing but tales, snippets, and newspapers. The momentous evolutions of history, the memorials of great men, the deeds of heroes, the thoughts of the wise, the wonders of science, the beauties of art, the charms of poesy are to them but as the stubble before the wind, or the sand that drifts along the shore.

If this is the be-all and end-all of our boasted civilization, if this is all education can bring about, better—a thousand times better—that we break up our printing presses and go back to the dark ages, to learn to appreciate the value of that which is now despised, and the worthlessness of that in which we take our greatest delight.





THE BIRTH OF A SOUL.

BY ROWLAND THIRLMERE.

PYRENEAN NOCTURNE.

I.

Here, proud as the summits that bloomed
in splendours of yellow and red,
When Spain had a frontier of fire,
(great blossoms, whose pollen of gold—
The blood of creation—ran slow
through the valleys beneath me, and rolled
To the barrier mountains,) I stand ;
dim echoes of years that are dead—

The moan of the crater's red mouth,
the roar of its vomit of steam,
The crack of the stones that were hurled
by Titans, the hiss of the ice—
Return with their horrors of sound,
and my soul is gripped in a vice ;
The strong, savage prime of the world
comes back in a wonderful dream.

II.

O, earth, thou hast battled like me,
 with struggles thou gainedst thine ends ;
Here, aloft, and at last thou art calm,
 white-headed, dispassionate, sage ;
I fain would have speech with the wise,
 ere manhood has leapt into age :
Old earth, be my counsellor—thou
 the strongest and staunchest of friends !

III.

There, eastward, the tide of the night
 draws near like the tide of the sea ;
The plains that were languid with heat
 are cooled and entranced by its charms ;
The distant, blue, tapering peaks
 are lost in its vapourous arms ;
The jewelled horizon is hid,
 and onward they travel to me,—

Those soft, rolling billows of mist,—
 through velvety gorges they creep,
And over the glacier's breast,
 From height to o'ertowering height :
Triumphant invasion is thine,
 magnificent tide of the night !
The pageant of provinces gone !
 Naught left but the hunger of sleep !

IV.

A wind brought the shuddering moon
 adrift in an ocean of cloud :
Behold ! a new realm of the soul
 above the great desert of smoke !

A king in a kingdom of air,
with glory of gladness I woke,
Forgetting, as children forget,
what lies in that tenuous shroud.

V.

Diana is out with her nymphs,
they hunt in the sheen and the shade :
I see the bright gleams of their hair
athwart the dread walls of the peak ;
But only the isard* descries
the flush on the goddess's cheek ;
He feels not her arrows of light,
nor fears the blithe face of the maid.

Below, in a Stygian gloom,
the glacier is troubled, and groans ;
Winds of the north and the west
have clashed, and united, assail
The rocks with invisible hands,
and hark ! the deep gulf of the vale
Protests with the voice of a ghost
against the wild volley of stones.

Yea, out of that funnel whence flowed
a torrent of terrible fire—
Bright wine of disorder expressed
from the winepress of chaos below—
Sounds rise and disturb the sad dreams
of vultures that sleep by the snow ;
In indolent anger they leave
their cornice and make for the spire :

* Pyrenean chamois.

There, sitting like spectres above
the peaks that are mastered by men,
They, craning their featherless necks,
look down on the stranger with scorn—
“ Who climbs in the hush of the dark
may slumber for ever at morn ;
The haughty, inviolate hills
may crush the invader again ! ”

VI.

Where kingdoms embrace on the heights
the moon has nor rival nor peer ;
She visits the easterly peaks,
she touches the spires of the south ;
She hangs on the shoulder of one,
she offers another her mouth ;
And, stately and proud as their queen,
the mountains her jewels uprear.
The gleam of the planets subdued,
she smiles at the flash of the stars ;
Arrived at her limits of blue,
she bends like a lover o'er Spain ;
Rich with the frost-fashioned gems
on the snow-field's glittering plain,
At the laughter of Sirius she laughs,
and mocks at the anger of Mars.
Far off, the great capitals now
receive her white blessing of love,
And holy and beautiful even
the saddest and grimest shine ;
They, memory-mirrored, appear,
arrayed in their vesture divine,
As if, with this wonderful light,
they took the pure sheen of The Dove.

VII.

O, what has descended to me
from highways that lead to The Throne ?
Can the Dove have come down ? Is this hour
to be large with the change of a soul ?
Yea; changed is my spirit to-night,—
life's gloom, with its evil control,
Has gone like the vapours that wrapped
the mountain when I was alone.

Companioned by star-crownéd peaks,
no longer can solitude lead
My soul to the Lethe of sleep ;
an influence enters my breast
Far richer than tangible gold,
far sweeter than rapturous rest ;
And, entering, comforts a heart,
sore troubled and sick of its need.

This exquisite silence of stars,
so pregnant with beautiful words,
Enfolds a man newly baptized,
whose chrisom lies pale in the moon :
Ah ! this is the night of all nights—
my zenith—the cardinal boon :
The blossoming groves of the soul
resound with the singing of birds !

Each clad in a pallium of snow,
the hierophant pinnacles laud
The God of the infinite depths,
Who, bidding my spirit be strong,
Hath sown in the innermost shrine
quick seeds of a happier song :
The moon, like an altar-lamp, hangs
from the roof of His temple, and, awed,

I kneel in the limitless fane,
 whose mysteries glimmer above ;
 A magical symphony throbs
 from a thousand invisible lyres ;
 I burn with a glorious hope,
 I dream in a swoon of desires ;
 My soul is enwrapped in the flame
 of immortal and infinite love.

VIII.

O, God of my fathers, enthroned
 beyond the wild doubts of the wise !
 Infallible Centre of Life !
 I know that the soul in these veins—
 This fire in the handful of clay—
 this feeling of triumph that reigns
 Where once was a cloudy despair,
 dies not as its tenement dies !
 Man's knowledge climbs higher and higher ;
 the dim, unattainable goal,
 Beyond the faint silvery dust
 that shines in the heavenly stream,
 Recedes, yet, advancing, we know
 that our Maker is more than a dream,—
 On summits of science is given
 new vision of faith to the soul.
 Horizons grow wider as men
 ascend towards the Source of the Mind,
 The more of God's wonders we see
 the more should we love and revere ;
 He, Centre of Systems, proclaims
 his puissance, that, manifest here,
 Illumines a soul with belief,
 once vagrant and mentally blind :

Transfigured by grace from on high,—
God's marvellous bounty that fell
Through ether, like meteor dust
that powders yon shimmering field,—
I yearn for some light from His Eyes
to show me the wonders revealed
In cycles that fashioned our earth
from flames of ebullient hell.

IX

Did life from the firmament fall
in grit of the galaxy there,—
The seed of the earliest moss,
the spore that evolved to a worm ;
The atom allied with the Lord,
the potent, primordial germ,—
Was it rained from some Eden to be
the father of all that is fair ?
Or did the white heart of the world,
when the world was a turmoil of flame,
Possess the beginnings of life,—
the primal, impalpable spark ?
From riot of vaporous fire came man,
and the rose, and the lark ?
Thou white-mantled pinnacle speak !
Thou knowest how chaos became
Resolved into order and law ;—
how, shaken with tumult, the earth
Sank down to her splendid repose,
with terrible, passionate sighs,—
Sprang we from the furnace below,
or fell the first life from the skies ?
Thou silent and beautiful peak,
O, read me the riddle of birth !

Each man in his aspirant brain
 possesses life's apex of power ;
Each mortal is ruler of self,
 God giveth him charge of his fate ;
Aloft in the passionless heavens
 they smile at the love, and the hate,
And the greed of the hurrying swarm
 that struggles and hopes for an hour.
We, seeking salvation above,
 are blind to the Eden below,—
This planet so splendidly dowered,
 where man must for ever abide :
We live in earth's glory of green,
 in the lovely unrest of the tide ;
Our death is a birth, and the soul,
 like the ocean ebbs ever to flow.

X

I climb by a perilous path ;
 the stones of the pinnacles sing
When, plunging to chasms of dusk,
 they pass in the silence profound ;
The moon, barren virgin of night,
 descends to her uttermost bound ;
The vultures have word of the light :
 O, what will the sunrising bring ?
Advancing with timorous gleam
 new morning appears in the east ;
I feel that to me is outstretched
 God's bounteous Omnipotent Hand !
Thou dawn full of warmth and of love
 bring blessings to sea and to land,
Bring fire for the altars, prepare
 once more the perpetual feast !

Below in Arcadian vales
 the Dryads their thurible sway,
 And hither the frosty wind brings
 their incense of spruce and of pine ;
 Sharp cold that has riven the rocks
 makes morn on the mountains divine,—
 And the tide of my song is at full,
 and the fountains of fancy at play !
 Last night I was even a shard
 of glass that encumbered the dust ;
 My heart is a winepress to-day,
 receiving new visions and shapes
 To be crushed by the soul, as the South
 withdraws the green blood from her grapes :
 May the vintage be pure and divine
 that comes from the tenebrous must !
 Innumerable blossoms may lie
 in the honeyed heart of a flower
 Like love in the bosom of love :
 thus praise in a passionate mind
 But sleeps till the accolade falls,
 with sight for the eyes that were blind ;
 Then song, welling up in the heart,
 breaks out in a torrent of power !

XI.

O, when he is weighed in the scales,
 how mean is vainglorious man !
 A seed with a gossamer wing,
 Is but a mite in the wonderful whole !
 Behold, in the Protean east,
 comes now what has counted the roll
 Of a million cycles of life :
 red javelins rise like a fan,

And a chillier wind from the north
 plays over the shivering height,
The ermined, immutable peaks,
 each wrapped in a silvery robe,
Receive their new vesture of light ;
 the moon, but the ghost of a globe,
Grows grey as she hides in the hills ;
 and brighter, and ever more bright
Becomes the vast hollow of air ;
 the timid red trembles to rose,
Pale amber now kindles to gold ;
 the gold into saffron must run ;
Wan planets recede with the dusk
 before the victorious sun,
That hangs like a bubble of fire,
 o'erbrimming the chalice of snows.
Like bergs of immovable seas,
 all white as the veil of a bride,
The sentinel summits of Spain,
 stand guarding the South, and the cold
Grey brows of the mountains are crowned
 with splendour of opal and gold,
As Lucifer sinks in the blue
 of the morn's magnificent tide.
Night vanishes down in the west,
 a phantom of purple and grey,
The solitude greets the return
 of its emperor orb, and his beams
Bleed full on the silvery ice ;
 thin rillels awake from their dreams,
And a vision of France and of Spain
 lies there in the eye of the day.

XII.

How good to have breath—to have strength !

O, sun, that of earth art the sire,
What child of thy luminous loins,
can equal this planet of ours ?

Whose wonders of colour and shade,
and life that is perfect in flowers,
Evoking all beautiful thoughts,
fill man with supernal desire !

My vigil was kept by the snow ;
with the vigilant isard I drew
Deep into my lungs the clear wind ;
and, nourished by more than the air,
My soul, waxing strong, tried its wings,—
took flight and behold ! it is there
With the eagles that wheel in the sun,
aloft in the ocean of blue !





IVAN VAZOFF.

BY JOSEPH ANGELOFF.

BEFORE dealing with the greatest name in Bulgarian

Literature—Ivan Vazoff—I should just like to mention the names of a few of the men who, by their literary zeal and their active patriotism, did so much to arouse in their countrymen that desire for freedom and a separate nationality which ended in the final liberation of Bulgaria: Rakovsky, Luben, Karazeloff, Slaveikoff, Levsky, Boteff, Drinoff, Ikonornoff, and L. Stoyanoff.

It has been well said that the darkest hour is the one preceding the dawn, and those who are acquainted with the recent history of Bulgaria, and have some knowledge of the awful atrocities perpetrated there just prior to the overthrow of the hated Turkish rule, will perhaps be able to form some idea of the nature of the work effected by these men, some of whom died on the scaffold, others in Turkish dungeons, and others in skirmishes with the enemy in the wild passes of the Balkans.

Ivan Mincheff Vazoff was born on June 27th, 1850, at Sopot, a small town situated in the Stremsky Vale, at the foot of the Balkans, and about forty-five miles from Philippopolis in South Bulgaria. His father was one of the leading merchants in the small town, and was much

respected on account of his honesty, straightforwardness, and noble character. His mother was a woman of considerable intelligence, her love for literature being one of her most marked characteristics, and this was no doubt inherited by her son. In his early youth Vazoff became acquainted, not only with the principal works of Bulgarian literature, but also with many of the more important works of the Russian and Greek writers, through translations.

Vazoff received his education at the chief school of his native town, a very excellent one. The head master, a certain M. Beltcheff, had graduated in Kieff. This man was accustomed to recite to his scholars from the works of some of the most celebrated Russian poets—Lomonosoff, Derjavin, and Homiakova,—and this early acquaintance with Slavonic poetry had an undoubted effect on Vazoff's later work.

After completing his preliminary education at the school of his native town, Vazoff was sent by his father to the College of Kalofer, and there took lessons in modern Greek, this being essential for a mercantile career, for which his father intended him.

In 1866 he was removed to the College of Philippopolis, there to continue his studies in Greek, and also in Turkish, but as he considered this to be a waste of time, he took up the French and Russian languages. In the public examination, the father was considerably disappointed to find that his son had made no progress whatever in the Eastern commercial languages, and in consequence took him away from the school and employed him in his own business. While still at school he felt a strong inclination towards literature, and tried his powers at versification, but the value of these efforts cannot be estimated, as they were destroyed in a fire.

Like many other authors, Vazoff was obliged to glean his ideas from foreign sources, and he carefully studied the best works of foreign authors, principally French and Russian, in the school libraries existing in the chief towns. In his father's shop he was not a success, for instead of paying attention to the business, he wrote verses, and with these he filled most of the account books and ledgers, and in addition to this, the walls and all available empty spaces in the shop were covered with his rhymes.

In 1870 he was sent to Roumania—to some relatives—to complete his mercantile training. Here his early verses—which were, however, of no great value—appeared for the first time in print in two magazines the “Periodical Review” and the “Reading Room.” In 1872 he went to Constantinople as a teacher in a Bulgarian school, but being dissatisfied, he returned to Sopot, and there hesitated between the only two employments open to him—teaching or trade. His choice fell upon the latter, and he entered his father's business once more.

Soon after this he got mixed up with the Revolutionary committee, and as one of the most prominent members, became an object of suspicion to the Turkish authorities, so much so, that in 1876 he was obliged to fly across the Balkans. He reached Roumania in safety, and at Bucharest joined the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee there.

The three stormy years that followed saw the final development of his genius, for towards the end of 1876 appeared in book form, three famous volumes of his patriotic lyrical poetry, “The Banner,” “The Sorrows of Bulgaria,” and “The Deliverance.” These three volumes attracted a good deal of attention, and were read by all Bulgarians with avidity. In these books is given, in admirable verse, the progressive story

of the April revolution and its sad ending. His last volume "Deliverance," is entirely devoted to the valour of the Russian soldiers and to eulogizing the name of Alexander II., the liberator of Bulgaria.

In 1877, Vazoff received an appointment from the Russians in a judicial capacity at Sistov; and there he learned the sad news that his father had been murdered by the Bashi-Bazouks, and that the town of Sopot had been destroyed and burned to ashes.

In 1880 he went to Philippopolis, and was there elected as a member of the Provincial Assembly of what was then Eastern Roumelia and is to-day Bulgaria. He settled there, and published his earliest prose works—his stories "Not Long Ago," "Mitrofan," "Hadji Akhil," "The Outcast," "The Comedy of Mihkolaki," and "A Corner of Stara Planina." These books contain short stories admirably descriptive of the every-day life and doings of the people, the quaint customs of the country districts being truthfully portrayed. The comedy deals with what in England would be termed a town councillor, and in his book Vazoff satirizes the bumptious ignorance of this class of man.

In addition to these, four new collections of poems were published about this time—"Guzla," "Fields and Woods," "Zagorka" and "Italia"; and the drama "Ruska." The first two volumes are the most popular. The poems deal with the simple life of a pastoral people, and are admirably descriptive of a rich and fertile land. Among the characters typified are those celebrated patriots who rose into fame by fighting and dying for their country.

In 1885, during the war between Bulgaria and Servia, Vazoff visited the battlefields of Slivnitsa and Pirot, and sang of the valour of the Bulgarian soldiers, and also

produced the little volume entitled "Slivnitza," which deals mostly with the rashness of King Milan, who declared the war which ultimately lost him his crown.

In 1886 Vazoff was obliged to leave his country and fly to Russia on account of his political views. He remained in Odessa until March, 1889, and it was in this town that he wrote his historical romance "Pod Igoto," or ("Under the Yoke,") which is considered his masterpiece. "Pod Igoto" first appeared in serial form in the excellent *Svornik* (or *Miscellany*) published by the Bulgarian Ministry of Public Instruction.

In this book Vazoff's genius reaches high maturity and exhibits his best style. His love for the subject shows itself all through the book, and one does not find the slightest approach to sentimentality or affectation in this sad picture. "Under the Yoke" is not one of the novels one is accustomed to read merely as a pastime, not a novel which relies on antiquarianism or poetical imagination, but is the solid work of one who fought and suffered and then set himself to chronicle.

The story takes place during the year 1875, and it contains many beautiful descriptive touches relative to the Balkan Valleys. The scene of action centres at a small town at the foot of the Balkan Mountains. This town—Bela Cherkova—is in reality Sopot, the birth-place of the author. The plot describes one of the abortive attempts made by the Bulgarians to throw off the tyrannical Turkish yoke, with the hope that help would be afforded by Russia. The story ends very sadly with the failure of the insurrection, and the leading patriots, including the hero Ognianoff and the heroine Rada, are sacrificed in the unsuccessful attempt to free their country. The action proceeds quickly, is full of interest, and the reader does not discover this failure until the end of the book.

Ognianoff, the hero of the book, is one of the leading revolutionists who has just escaped from Diarbekir, a fortress in the heart of Asia Minor used as a place of transportation for political criminals. He arrives at Bela Cherkova, the scene of action, and makes for the house of a Marko Chorbadiji, a friend of his father. Here the book describes in clear and broad outline the customs and habits of the family circle of Marko Chorbadiji, who in his dressing-gown and slippers was sitting at supper with his household in the courtyard. Something rustled at the dark end of the yard and tiles fell with a clatter from the wall—this was Ognianoff! He was afraid to come in by the door as someone might see him, so clambered over the wall, where Marko found him and promised him his help, and just as he made the enquiry "Has anyone seen you?" there came a loud knock at the door. Marko asked "Who is there?" The answer came "The On-Bashi" (Corporal of Police). At the first knock Ognianoff clambered hurriedly over the wall and leaped into the street, and rapidly guiding himself by the aid of the walls was soon out into open country, and far away found shelter in a water mill. Here an extract from the book will give an idea of its style:—

Though dripping with water, and blinded by the lightening, while the crashing thunder still rang in his ears, Ognianoff wandered on at random among the fields, orchards, and gardens, where no refuge was to be had. At last the flashing of a waterfall overcame all other sounds and reached his ears.

It was a mill-stream. On a sudden a new flash disclosed to him the roof of the mill, nestling among drooping willows. He pushed at the door, which opened. He entered. The mill was dark and silent. Soon steps were heard approaching, and Ognianoff hastened to hide in a narrow space between the granary and the wall. "There now, the wind has blown the door open," said a rough voice in the darkness, and a petroleum lamp was at once lighted.

Ognianoff, hidden in his corner, stooped and saw the miller, a tall, gaunt

peasant, and with him a barefooted girl in a short blue dress, probably his daughter, who was closing and trying to bolt the door. She was about 13 or 14 years old, but still quite a child, and her black eyes peeped out with childish innocence from under her long lashes.

"Now Marika, you go off to bed. I wonder why your mother sends you here? Only for me to have the more anxiety," added the miller. Marika, without waiting any longer, went to the far end of the mill, said her prayers and lay down to sleep; in a moment she was slumbering peacefully.

Ognianoff watched the scene with lively curiosity. The miller's rough but kindly face inspired him with confidence. It was impossible that a traitor's soul could lurk behind that honest countenance. He decided to come out and ask him for aid and counsel, but at that minute a loud knock was heard at the door.

"Open the door, miller," cried someone in Turkish. He went to the door, fastened the bolt securely, and returned pale with terror.

The hammering at the door continued, followed by the bark of a dog. "Turks out hunting!" muttered the miller, whose ear had recognised the bark of a greyhound. "What do the brutes want? It must be Yemeksiz Pehlivan."

Yemeksiz Pehlivan, the wildest of midday and midnight marauders, was the terror of the neighbourhood.

A fortnight before he had murdered the whole family of Gauchó. They said—and not without some ground—that it was he who had cut off the child's head which had been brought to the town the day before. The door shook under the knocking. The miller remained for a moment plunged in thought, clasping his head with both hands, in doubt as to what course he should follow. A cold sweat broke out on his forehead. Suddenly he moved to a dusty shelf, from under which he took an axe, and then went to the door, which was nearly beaten in by the knocking, but his momentary decision vanished as soon as he glanced at his daughter. The paternal feeling overcame his perturbed conscience. He thought of the Bulgarian proverb "The sword does not strike the bowed head." He hurriedly replaced the axe behind the granary where Ognianoff was hidden, covered up Marika carefully, and opened the door. On the threshold stood two armed Turks in hunting costume. The first was in truth the bloodthirsty Yemeksiz Pehlivan and his companion. Casting an inquisitive glance round the mill, they entered. "Why didn't you open, miller?" he asked. The miller muttered some excuse, bowing to the ground, and casting an uneasy glance at the end of the mill where Marika lay sleeping. "Are you alone here?" and Yemeksiz looked round. "Quite alone" was the hurried reply; then thinking a lie was useless, the miller added, "and the child is asleep over there." The Turks cast eager glances at the sleeping girl. A

cold sweat moistened the miller's forehead. Yemeksiz turned to him with an assumed kindness. "Guv'nor," he said, "sorry to trouble you; go and buy us a bottle of raki." "But Pehlivan aga, all the shops are shut now, its midnight," answered the miller, trembling at the terrible idea of leaving Marika alone in such company. "Go along with you! no shop will refuse to serve you if you say its for me. I want you to treat us—that's the way to make friends." He said this in jest, being certain of obtaining his end. He did not even seek to hide his intention from the unhappy father.

Yemeksiz glanced at the sleeping child in her careless and innocent attitude. Seeing that the miller did not move, he began to grow impatient, but still retained his assumed gentleness, and said quietly: "Mashallah! (or bravo) that's a pretty girl of yours, eh? Off you go, we are your guests, you must treat us. "You fetch the raki, and we will look after the mill." Then in a threatening tone: "Don't you know Yemeksiz Pehlivan?"

The miller had understood from the first the abominable design screened by that shallow trick. His simple, honest nature revolted at the thought, but he was caught in the trap—he was alone against two armed men. To resist was foolish and useless; his death, which was a matter of indifference to him, could not save his child. He tried again by prayers to soften his enemies: "Gentlemen, I am an old man—take pity on my poor old bones, I'm worn out by my day's work, let me sleep in peace. Don't blacken my face. Don't bring disgrace upon me."

He was addressing deaf ears. The Turk exclaimed: "Come, come, we are thirsty—you talk too much, go for the raki;" and he pushed him to the door.

"I won't leave my mill at this time of night! Let me alone!" said the miller. The two Turks then threw aside their feigned gentleness of manner, and their eyes flashed furiously on the miller. "What! he shows his tusks, the pig!" cried Yemeksiz, drawing his yataghan, while his eyes became bloodshot. "You may kill me, but I won't leave my child alone," said the miller, humbly but decidedly. Yemeksiz stood up. "Topal Hassan," he said—"throw the dog out—I don't want to dirty my knife." The other rushed at the miller, seized him, and forced him to the door. The miller rose to his feet and sprang in again, crying, "Mercy! mercy!"

The noise woke Marika, who stood up in terror. When she saw the Turks with drawn swords, she shrieked and fled to her father. "Mercy gentlemen!" cried the unfortunate father, clasping his child in his arms. Then at once the Turks seized his hands and bound them. "That's it, Topal Hassan; let's tie up the old rat of a miller, since he wants to stop here, let him stay and see the show—that's what a fool like that deserves. He shall remain tied up, and when we set fire to the mill it will be our turn to look on and enjoy ourselves."

And the two brigands, paying no attention to his cries, forced the miller

up to a beam and began to tie him with ropes. The miller frenzied with terror at the thought of what he was going to see, roared for help like a wild beast, but no help was to be hoped. Marika opened the door and began to shriek, but only the echoes replied. "Here girl, you come in, we want you," cried Yemeksiz, as he fetched her in. "Marika, come dear," the miller shouted in his frenzy, calling on his child for help.

Ognianoff all the while had been watching the scene, his legs trembled unnaturally, his hair stood on end. All that he had seen and undergone that evening, from leaving Morko's house, was so fearful, that it seemed to him like a dream. At first he made sure the Turks had come for him, and that his fate was sealed. But now that he saw that he was to be a spectator of something far more terrible, a blind rage and despair fired his very soul. He had never looked on blood before, but the Turks seemed to him like flies—fatigue, weakness all disappeared. He stretched out his hand and seized the axe; he passed along mechanically, stooping behind the wheat sacks; rose up, pale as death, rushed at Yemeksiz, who stood with his back to him, and plunged the axe into his body. The Turk fell to the ground. Topal Hassan left the rope with which he was fastening the miller, drew his pistol, and fired it at Ognianoff.

The action of the shot put out the lamp, and all was in darkness. Then in the dark began a terrible struggle. The combatants, at first two, but soon three in number, rolled in the dark. Topal Hassan, as strong as a bullock, resisted desperately his two antagonists, who on their part knew they must conquer or meet a fate which was only too certain. When the lamp shone again Hassan was in his death-agony. Ognianoff during the fight managed to get hold of his knife and plunge it in his breast. The two bodies were weltering in blood.

Then the miller looked with wonder at the unknown assistant. Before him stood a tall young man, deadly pale, thin, with piercing black eyes, long hair, covered with dust. His coat was torn, stained with mud, his waistcoat had lost its buttons, and showed that he had no shirt; his trousers were in rags, and his boots scarcely held together.

The miller cast a look of sympathy on him and said: "Sir, I don't know who you are, or how you came to be here, but as long as I live I can't pay you back for this. You've saved me from death, and from worse than death; you have spared my grey hairs from shame. May God bless and reward you. Do you know who he is?" pointing to Yemeksiz. "He has made mothers and daughters weep before now. Now the world is free of the monster. God bless you my son."

I am tempted before concluding to give another extract depicting a theatre scene, which I consider illus-

trative and humourous, and which will at the same time, enable the reader to form a just opinion of Vazoff's versatility.

The drama is called "Suffering Genevieve." The plot in few words is as follows: A German Count Siegfried, goes to the wars against the Moors in Spain, and leaves his wife, the beautiful Countess Genevieve, inconsolable in her grief. No sooner has he gone, than his steward Golas, appears before the Countess with insulting proposals, which she rejects with scorn. The vindictive Golas then slays her faithful attendant, Drako, and throws the Countess into a dungeon; at the same time he informs the Count that he has surprised the Countess in a guilty intrigue with Drako. The Count's anger knows no bounds; he sends orders to put his faithless spouse to death, but the ruffians whom Golas has charged with this duty take pity on the Countess, and leave her to her fate with her child, in a mountain cave, falsely assuring Golas that his orders have been carried out. Seven years elapse, the Count returning heart-broken. In his castle he finds a letter left for him by his wife, proving her innocence. Golas is loaded with chains and loses his reason. Soon the Count proceeds to the chase for recreation, and by chance comes upon the Countess in her cave, together with her child and a doe who has nourished them with her milk. All become reconciled and return joyfully to the castle.

At the time in which the scene of this story is laid everyone knew the plot. It would be impossible to give you an idea of the excitement this projected representation has caused among the townspeople. This was going to be a grand night for Bela-Cherkova. The richer housewives had got their best finery, the poorer sold their yarn and invested the proceeds in tickets, instead of making their usual purchases of salt and soap. Universal satisfaction was expressed when Ognianoff was cast for the Count. Golas, who goes mad, was to be played by Fratio, (in order to increase the effect, Fratio let his hair grow for a month).

Ilia was the servant Drako, who rehearsed twenty times a day how he should fall when Golas pierced him with his sword. He was also to bark later on in the piece as the Count's dog. For Genevieve, Deacon Vikenti was suggested on account of his good looks and long hair; but it was thought unsuitable for a person in holy orders to take part, so the rôle was given to another, together with a pot of white pomatum to cover his moustache. A great difficulty was presented by the decoration, which had to be provided as economically as possible, and the only outlay was for a curtain.

A red stuff was purchased, and to make it more artistic, a house-painter from another town was commissioned to paint a lyre on it. The best furniture in the town was laid under contribution for decoration; some

contributed the lace curtains; some glass vases; some mirrors; the convent lent its embroidered cushions; Bencho lent his worn-out old sofa—the only one in the place; and the church its small chandelier, which sufficed to illuminate the stage, spectators and all. As for the costumes, they were the same that had been worn three years before, when “Princess Raina” had been played.

Now, the theatre began to fill at sunset. The front rows were reserved for the notabilities, including the Bey, who had been specially invited. At his side sat D. Grigoroff, who had been put there to amuse him. The general public filled the rest of the room, and soon began to clamour eagerly for the curtain to rise.

The noisiest of all was Mother Ghinka, who knew the play by heart, and was telling her neighbour right and left all about it. The orchestra consisted of the local gipsy musicians, who played chiefly the Austrian National Anthem, doubtless in honour of the German Countess. At last the solemn moment arrived. The Austrian hymn ceased, and the curtain rose amid murmurs of admiration. The first to appear was the Count. He began to speak, but whenever he left out a word or altered, Mother Ghinka would cry “That’s wrong!” A trumpet sounds, and the envoys of Charlemagne summon him to the Moorish wars. The Count takes an affectionate farewell of Genevieve, who falls fainting. When she recovers and finds the Count gone, she weeps. The weeping aroused general hilarity. Mother Ghinka screamed “Cry you baby, can’t you? Let me come there and I will cry for you something like!”

Now appears Golas and tries to tempt Genevieve’s chastity, but she replies to his offers with disdain, and calls Drako to send him with a letter to the Count. Drako appears, and there is a general roar of laughter at his tall hat, Mother Ghinka calls out “Drako, take off Alafranga’s saucepan—off with it man!” But the scene assumes a tragical character. The enraged Golas draws his sword to run Drako through, but before he stabs him, Drako falls like a log to the ground, and remains motionless. The audience is dissatisfied with such a death, and clamours for Drako to get up and go through it again. Servants come in and drag him away by the feet, bumping his head along the ground, but Drako bears his pain heroically, and remains true to his part as a corpse. The Countess is flung into a dungeon, the act ends, and the Austrian hymn begins afresh. The room resounds with laughter and criticisms. Golas reaped the deserved hatred of several old grandmothers. One of them called to his mother “My word Tana, fine doings your Fratio’s been up to! Whatever has that poor girl done to him?” In the front row D. Grigoroff was explaining to the Bey the plot of the first act. He surpassed himself in eloquence, telling a long story of some French

Consul whom he had known, and who had repudiated his wife through a similar intrigue.

The Bey listened attentively, and the upshot was that he became convinced that the Count was the French Consul, and considered him as such ever after.

"This Consul seems to me to be a great fool," he said sternly, "or else why does he order his wife to be killed without even cross-examining her?"

Just then the Austrian hymn stopped, and the curtain rose. This time the scene represented a dungeon lighted by a single candle, Genevieve with her child weeps. The midnight hour, the gloomy cell, the sighs of an unhappy and powerless mother have a powerful effect on the spectators. Tears trickled down many of the women's faces, the number of those weeping increases, even some of the men shed tears when she writes to the Count. Genevieve is carried off to the forest for execution. The curtain falls.

"They seem a thoroughpaced set of scoundrels in that country," remarked the Bey to D. Grigoroff. "Where did you say all this took place?" "In Austria." "Austria! I don't think I have ever seen any of those Ghiaours yet!" "Oh, yes, your Excellency, you must have, why there is an Austrian living in the town now." "What! do you mean a little fellow with blue spectacles?" "Yes sir, the photographer." "I thought he was a Frenchman." "No sir, he is an Austrian from Drandahuy."

The third act followed. The Count returns, and the servant gives him Genevieve's letter. The Count reads the letter aloud and bursts into despairing sobs. The spectators share his sufferings; they also weep, some sobbing loudly; among these is the Bey.

The Count orders the treacherous Golas to be brought in. Golas appears ragged, repulsive, and loaded with chains. Fierce glances are cast upon him. The count reads to him the letter in which the Countess forgives him too.

The Count groans, tears his hair; and the audience cannot restrain its emotion; even Mother Ghinka, with tears, tries to console the others by exclaiming: "Don't cry good people, Genevieve is safe in the forest." Some ask, "Is she really safe Ghinka?" "Then for pity's sake tell the poor fellow to stop crying," said Grandmother Nitkovitza; and Mother Hajfi Pavlovitza cannot restrain herself, but calls out amid her tears to the Count, "Don't cry, my lad, don't cry, the girl is not dead." Meanwhile Golas goes mad. He looks round him strangely, with staring eyes and dishevelled hair. "Serve him right," cry the women. Fratio's mother, seeing her son in that state, lost her own self-control. "They have destroyed my son," she cried, "they have driven him out of his senses."

The last act is in the forest. A cave is seen, and there is Genevieve,

dressed in skins of animals, with her child. Genevieve sadly talks to her child of its father, but hearing the bay of a hound, retires into the cave. The barking grows louder, and the opinion is that Ilia is more successful in that part, because he aroused a reply from some of the street dogs outside.

The Count appears; the spectators hold their breath; Mother Wanitza begins to be afraid lest he should pass by the cave, and suggests that he should be told that his wife is in there.

But the Count has seen it; and he exclaims: "Come forth, I charge ye, be ye man or beast!" Here the Count discovers his lost Countess; they embrace—more sobs and tears. Here Mother Petrovitzka advises them; "Go home dears, and be happy together, and don't trust them confounded Golasses."

The Bey gave the same advice as Mother Petrovitzka.

The piece terminated with a song: "Count Seigfried, now rejoice in peace," in which the Count, Countess, and their suite took part. But after the two first stanzas of the song had been gone through, suddenly on the stage broke out the revolutionary song:

"Blaze forth, fond love of fatherland,
Till 'gainst the Turk arrayed we stand!"

The sound fell like a thunderbolt upon the audience. At first only one voice had begun, one by one the whole troupe joined in; and gradually till the entire audience took it up. A sudden and patriotic enthusiasm filled all those present. The bold and stirring air spread like some unseen wave, filled the hall, passed the threshold, and wafted abroad into the night; it sent a hot and fiery emotion through the blood. Every one sang it in chorus—men and women. It drew all hearts with it, united the actors and the audience, and rose to heaven like a prayer.

"Sing out, boys! God bless you! Sing out!" cried Mincho.

The Bey, who did not understand a word of the song, listened to it delightedly. He asked D. Grigoroff to interpret it to him, one line after another. Anyone else would have lost his head, but D. Grigoroff was not a man to be puzzled by a difficult question. He explained it all to the Bey with an air of great simplicity. The song, he said, expressed the ardent love the Count and Countess felt for one another. The Count says to her, "I love you a hundred times more than before;" to which she replies, "And I love you a thousand times more." He says he will build a church on the spot where the cave is; and she vows to sell all her diamonds and dispose of the proceeds by building a hundred marble fountains.

"That seems a great many fountains," said the Bey. "I should think a few bridges would have been more useful."

"You see, sir, water is scarce in Austria; that is why people drink so much beer there," answered Grigoroff.

The Bey nodded approvingly at this reply. "But where is Golas?" asked the Bey, as he looked in vain for Fratio. "He doesn't come on any more, sir." "Quite right; they ought to hang the scoundrel."

If they ever act this piece again, tell the Consul not to leave him alive—it will be quite right.

The song came to an end, the curtain fell amid cries of bravo! The Austrian hymn began again, and the room was soon empty.

In all Ivan Vazoff's works we find that truthfulness to nature and instinctive touch of humanity, which renders his books so valuable, the more so, that the period described, is one of the most momentous epochs that can possibly occur in the history of any country, the epoch of liberation from a foreign yoke, the epoch of a new national life, which has succeeded in shaking off that yoke. Such an author, at such a period, is indeed of inestimable value, for he crystalises the phases and the feelings of the period, and, by rendering these in book form, hands down to posterity a thrilling picture of his times. Such a book as "Under the Yoke" may well be termed the modern epic, the Homeric story of Bulgarian liberation, and in the hands of Vazoff—the Bulgarian Homer—that story has found its greatest poet. All his characters, from the hero to the extremely unimportant blind man, are true to nature, we feel that we are in the presence of real men and women—not as in some books—mere dolls.

The author knows his characters, has lived with them, suffered with them, and fought with them; therefore it will be seen that the influence of Vazoff upon the intellectual and social life of Bulgaria cannot be over-estimated. Not only is he known in his own country, but also in other Slavonic nations, such as Russia, Servia, Bohemia, Moravia, and translations of his works have

even penetrated to England, France, and Germany. To him more than any other, is due the fact that Bulgaria has been raised to an intellectual position among the nations of Europe.

As a motto to Vazoff's works, the following lines of Matthew Arnold's are very suitable:—

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said, "*Thou ailest here, and here.*"





ON THE LAW CASE: SHYLOCK v. ANTONIO.

BY JAMES T. FOARD.

IT has been oft repeated and reiterated that Shakspeare from a racial prejudice against the Jews, or because he could not emancipate himself from the ignorance and superstitions of his time, framed his play "The Merchant of Venice," to hold up the Hebrew race to scorn and contempt. Mr. Zangwill not long since in Manchester, probably for the one-hundred-thousandth time in the world's history, tendered this view. Shakspeare could not *present* a fair picture of a Jew, because he was a Christian, and also because there were no Jews in England in his time, and he could not therefore have known anything of their character. Mr Zangwill did not seem to recognise the fact that as there were no Jews, the poet was less liable to be prejudiced against them. But this may pass. My purpose is merely to deal with the law involved in the trial scene, between Shylock and Antonio, and this not as a lawyer but as a question of criticism, and as an issue upon which depends a much more momentous problem in Shakspeare's biography, viz., Whether he was "The Noverint" satirised in 1589 as the author of "Hamlet," or whether "The Noverint" was as suggested by his omniscient biographers, Thomas Kyd.

Of course the term "Noverint" as employed by that "biting satirist," Nash, may have been intended as a sneer at the poet as an ex-attorney, or may have been merely directed at the author of *Hamlet*, in consequence of the redundancy of his legal phrases in his earlier plays, and especially in that particular tragedy.

You are probably aware that the Jews were expelled from England in the reign of Edward, in the year A.D. 1290, and that they were readmitted as a concession by Oliver Cromwell; but you are also possibly not aware that 300 years ago, actually in 1594, although there were nominally no Hebrews in England, we had an affair Dreyfus, like our French neighbours on the borders of the Seine.

History often repeats itself. But generally in different cadences. Sometimes vividly, and occasionally vehemently. At times as a whisper, at others as an echo. In 1594, London was shocked and shaken to its centre by a deliberate, cruel, and carefully contrived conspiracy, at the instance of Philip of Spain, to poison Queen Elizabeth. That plot was early in the year exposed, and on June 7th its chief agent and hired assassin, a Jew named Roderigo Lopez was duly executed. He had also engaged to dispose of Antonio Perez, a Portugese refugee, who alleged claims to the throne of Spain, but this as a merely subsidiary turpitude need not be dilated on.

The peculiar atrocity of Lopez's crime arose in the popular apprehension from the fact that he had been for many years a pet, so to speak, of the Queen's, greatly favoured by her, and that his fortune as physician and courtier had been wholly due to her kindness and grace. He was no doubt a skilful practitioner as a member of the College of Physicians, but he had been selected by her Majesty, from many probably as able, or abler men of her

own countrymen, to be the Court Physician and her own special medical adviser.

Now without going further into Lopez's history, or the character of the plot, or the vehement prejudice and conflicting views its ingratitude and villany excited, all interesting topics, I may say that probably the discovery of Lopez's treason, and the wave of popular feeling it induced, was the sole, or chief cause, influencing Shakspeare at that particular date to turn his attention to a Jewish theme. Lopez was hanged at Tyburn on June 7th. The comedy, "The Merchant of Venice," is believed to have been produced in August. There was an epidemic of Hebrew allusions at the theatres, and none of them, as may be supposed, flattering just at that time. Marlowe's "Jew of Malta," written some time before, sprung again into the liveliest popularity, and was played between May and December more than twenty times. Gosson's "Jew" played at the Bull, was revived. "Titus Andronicus," and Greene's "Selimus,"* with its poisoning Jew Abraham, were rejuvenated, if the phrase may be allowed, and a fervour and intensity of passion was displayed against the race, heretofore in abeyance. Whether from this accidental circumstance, and not from any inherent prejudice or ignorance, Shakspeare wrote his play, I am not prepared to discuss. I may mention that Mr. Sidney Lee, whose actual name is Levi, and who is a Jew, the author of the best monograph on Shakspeare of our time, wrote an article in 1880 to prove that Shylock was in fact moulded on Lopez, and that Antonio was probably as a name

* The first edition printed in 1594, contained this reference :—
 "Bajazet hath with him a cunning Jew professing physic, and so skilled therein as if he had power over life and death, withal a man so stout and resolute that he will venture anything for gold." In fact this Jew Abraham, at the instance of Selimus poisons his employer's father Bajazet, who had succoured and maintained him, and in whose service and pay he was.

based on that of Antonio Perez. I do not acquiesce in his views, save as to the name,† but am quite willing to believe that the poet knew intimately Lopez as the Queen's physician, had often met him, while he himself was a member of Lord Essex's company of players, and often had seen him at Essex House, and in company with the Earl and his bosom friend, Southampton, the poet's noble patron.

I do not propose to deal with the clotted nonsense involved in the proposition expounded by Mrs. Inchbald, Douce and others, that Shakspeare by Shylock "intended to hold all Jews up to detestation." Heine has relieved me fully of this species of calumny, but I proceed to deal with the stupendous follies alleged against the poet, that on account of his imputed prejudices he has written nonsense in form of Law.

As far back as 1792 a Hebrew gentleman, Nathan Ben Boaz, probably an assumed name, wrote rather a heavy parody to suggest that Shylock at his trial and after, was treated with great barbarity and marvellous injustice. He considered that Shylock's just claims were evaded by shameless sophistry; that it was a mere mockery and insult to decree him a pound of flesh as a just claim, and then punish him if he took it, by the confiscation of his goods, and that this was in unison, only, with ordinary vulgar Christian prejudice. The sapient critic then pertinently asked "Can we suppose the legislators of Venice so prescient in their wisdom as to have enacted a decree, that a man may lawfully accept his debtor's forfeiture yet may be punished for not performing an impossibility in taking it?"

† Mr. Lee in his *Biography*, p. 68, says that a Christian named Antonio should be the cause of the ruin alike of the greatest Jew in Elizabethan England, and of the greatest Jew of the Elizabethan Drama, is a curious confirmation of the theory that Lopez was the begetter of Shylock.

This apparent absurdity may probably have incited in other than Hebraic bosoms a doubt of Shakspeare's fairness or sense of justice. But in March, 1872, an American lawyer, Mr. Isaac Cohen, or as written, Mr. Esek Cowen, of Troy, New York, undertook to show that the poet's law was nonsense, not less absurd than Portia's pleading as a woman—or Nerissa's clerkship. He published his views satirically in "The Albany Law Journal" as a case on appeal in the Supreme Court of New York, "Shylock v. Antonio," and thus presented his case: "Shakspeare's law bears not the slightest resemblance to any principle of law or equity, ever recognised in a civilised country." This strong condemnation by a lawyer, it well founded, shows, of course, that if Shakspeare was a Noverint "he was not much of "A Noverint" after all. But Mr. Cohen's views have actually been repeated during the past year in the *American Law Review* and the *English Law Times*, as if they expressed reason and common sense.

Mr. Cowen's assertion that it was a cruel and iniquitous verdict, without any show of justice or fairness to the plaintiff, is based on two conclusions. The first that it is settled law that when a bond is good in part and bad in part, it is good for the sum secured by it, the condition as to the pound of flesh being unreasonable and void. 2. That the deed was extinguished, by the tender of the amount by Bassanio, on behalf of his kinsman and friend, in court. The learned legist wanders off to the old story about a contract of a farthing for the first nail, &c., which, having no discoverable relation to the points at issue, I omit.

He further suggested that if Portia's admission that the bond was "a good bond" was true, her caution about spilling a drop of blood was absolute folly or "stupendous absurdity," and says "it is a familiar rule of construction that the right to do a certain act confers the right to the

necessary incidents of that act (this is not very neatly expressed, but may serve). The referee holds that, by the terms of the bond, the plaintiff had a right to cut off a pound of the defendant's flesh. If by the term referee Portia is meant, this is wholly untrue. She denies that he has any such right, except on terms to be imposed by the Court.

Now as no one, suggests again the angry legist and commentator, can cut off an exact pound of flesh to a grain, or without drawing blood, it is clear that the contracting parties could have intended no such restrictions, and the Court had no right to imply or supply them. This to me seemed unintelligible nonsense, and a gross perversion of fact, but finding it adopted and repeated at great length, with very varied embellishments in the *English Law Journal*, I have thought fit to reply to it.

But before specifically answering on this point of law, let me diverge for an instant or two, to the question of Shakspeare's alleged prejudice, and lack of impartiality, and his supposed ignorance of the Hebrew character, as displayed in the idiosyncrasy of Shylock.

Contrasted with Barabas in the "Jew of Malta," or Aaron in "Titus Andronicus," which was undoubtedly a play of Marlowe's, worked on, and in part adapted and adopted by, as well as attributed to, Shakspeare, Shylock is certainly as "Hyperion to a Satyr." Barabas was a brute beast, and Aaron and Abraham were little better. In the Jew of Malta, Barabas is designed to bear a specific likeness to the poisoning Lopez, as he says "Being young I studied physic, and began to practice first on the Italian (as was the case with the Portugese physician). I enriched the priests with burials, and always kept the sexton's arms in use. There is no music like a Christian's knell." And he is even base enough to poison his only daughter, Abigail, as well as a

whole community of nuns. And he further soliloquises, having by usury got authority, "he would maintain it by firm policy." Roderigo Lopez claimed to be of Portuguese origin, and first practised in Italy, and had probably, like Barabas, lived in Malta and Portugal for a time, as he spoke both languages fairly well, and was employed as an interpreter by Essex while in favour. He was originally introduced at the English Court by Leicester, but whether Leicester's reputed fame as a poisoner, or as it was then called "in the Italian arts," set forth in Leicester's Commonwealth,* was in part due to Lopez's skill, can only be surmised. It is sufficient to say that Dudley was malevolently charged with many deaths by Italian means, and most notably with that of Walter Devereux, second Earl of Essex, and was supposed himself to have died of a potion he had prepared for another person, Blount, in September, 1588.

Now in spite of the temptations to refer to the poisoning episode, and to a species of criminality particularly obnoxious to English feeling, the poet it cannot be doubted, has in no sense deviated in intention from the just portrayal of the Semitic character in Shylock. Usury has from the earliest period in Hebraic history been a distinguishing feature in their lives. As Blackstone pointed out the Mosaic law was merely political, and prohibited the Jews from taking usury from other Jews their brethren, but in express words permitted them to take it of a stranger. †How strictly they have preserved and cherished this permission, may be gleaned from the Royal

* Which in addition to the poisoning of Walter Devereux, the second Earl of Essex, of which Leicester was popularly accused, alleges that he also poisoned Lord Sheffield, Cardinal Chatillon, Alice Draycot, Sir Nicholas Throgmorton, Lady Lenox, and the Earl of Sussex, besides attempting the life of Simier and killing his wife, Amy Robsart, by violence.

† Dent, 23, 20.

Commission on Money Lending's report of last year. The poet in adopting the story, which was an old world story, and traceable back to a book of novels, "*Il Pecorone*," by Giovanni Florentino, of 1378, was therefore only illustrating a legend, which in various forms probably had its origin among Arian nations, in the remotest antiquity. But his Jew, as Mr. Levi has confessed, is marked by a faithful adherence to Jewish sentiment. "His love for his daughter, so unlike Barabas, who poisoned his, and for his wife, Leah, whose memory he piously cherishes, are touches of character which theories of dramatic art only incompletely explain," but which are quite "in consonance with the social virtues always attributable to the Hebrews."

In this picture of the Usurer, there is no attempt, to localise or individualise, or as the slang of the day would say, at realism. Shylock is neither made a doctor nor a poisoner, and there is not any, even the slightest, allusion of word or phrase to the monstrous treason of which Lopez had been guilty, of betraying his adopted country for gain to Spain, or to the poisoning of his greatest benefactor, although these features were fermenting in the public mind, and such a reference on the stage would have theoretically brought down the house.

On the contrary we may notice, Shylock was a resolved, revengeful, and sanguinary citizen, staunch to his people, his faith, and the law, a fond father and exemplary in his domestic relations, with a score of centuries of persecution and wrong to avenge, and that is all. That this spirit of revenge is not foreign to or libellous of his race, we may prove by reading a letter in the Calendar of State Papers, 1580-86; in a letter from Bernadine Mendoza, Philip's former Ambassador, a Jew, and a correspondent of the employer of Lopez. In 1584, July 5, Mendoza

had been driven out of England for his treachery and insolence, and he thus wrote to Philip, his employer.

"They made use, these great Lords (the Lords of the Council) of impertinences I dare not repeat to your Majesty," and then adds, as his last words written on English soil:

"The insolence of these people has brought me to a state in which my only desire to live is for the purpose of my revenging myself upon them, and I pray that God may let it be soon, and will give me grace to be his instrument of vengeance, even though I have to walk barefooted to the other side of the world to beg for it." The Armada of 1588, and the subsequent attempt to poison Elizabeth, were no doubt parts of his revenge without walking to the other side of the World, and prove that Shylock's thirst for revenge was no abnormal trait.

I have already referred to Heine's eloquent picture of the justice of Shakspeare's treatment of the despised Jew. Heine said "that when in Venice he was haunted by the poet's creation, Shylock, that he looked for him in the Synagogue and on the Rialto, and felt his presence everywhere. He saw him with his white talar on his head, praying more fervently devout, true worshipper that he was, than any of his fellow devotees, and lifting up his soul, full of wild and strong passions, to the great and inexorable Jehovah, as he believed in him."

A celebrated German critic, M. Ihering, has even more emphatically disposed incidentally of the calumny that Shakspeare was pandering to the immediate and awakened prejudices of the English people, or holding up Jews generally to derision, obloquy, or hatred, or endeavouring to excite animosity against this persecuted race.

He refers to the tragic grandeur of Shylock in reply to the appeals and taunts of his hereditary enemies, and the

persecutors of his race in the court in the simple words, "I crave the law," and then his inquiry of Portia after her adverse exposition, "Is that the law?" as illustrating the profound knowledge of the poet in dealing with humanity. He proceeds, "Here is the representative of a despised, humiliated and persecuted race, with all the law abiding instincts of his nature, and they are the most law abiding and law evading people in the world, standing up and declaring in the face of all hostility, 'I crave the law. I stay here on my bond.'" It is not, says the critic, the claim of Shylock which is on trial, but the law of Venice. The law which embodies justice, in effect, the feeling of justice which should animate the whole world. For with Shylock the written law, coming as it did from Mount Sinai, is indeed the voice of God, and the critic then comments: "To what mighty, gigantic proportions does not the figure of Shylock dilate as he utters these words. It is no longer the Jew demanding a pound of flesh, it is Venice herself that knocks at the door of the Court,—his rights and the rights of Venice are one; with his rights the rights of Venice (and indeed of universal justice, let me add) are struck down. Thus it is when Genius takes matters in hand. The trial scene, no matter what its intrinsic defects, if it have any, which we will see, is the tribunal and occasion on which the accumulated wrongs and persecutions of thousands of years, are weighed and challenged. The Jew craves the law, stands and falls by its strictest letter in spite of his ill usage, for it is his only bulwark, his citadel, his defence in all his accumulated wrongs.

Beside the accusations of "prejudice," of dramatic incapacity and bad law, the learned American critic and Professor of Law at the University, accuses the poet of being guilty of the ridiculous, the monstrous absurdity of

the poet's treatment of his theme, as well as the barbaric cruelty of the Trial Scene, and its gross inconsistency and immorality.

On the ground of prejudice he remarks that "the poet in the character of Shylock has drawn an exaggerated portrait of Judaism. It is not a likeness, but a hideous caricature. The cruel Jew is represented as more diabolical than the devil himself." To this I answer Shakspeare simply adopted the plot and main incident of the play as he found it, to the charge that the character has been travestied or outraged, I have replied by the citations from Heine and Ihering.

He suggests that the play "violates the law of dramatic probability, and inspires horror rather than terror," and "that it awakens none of the interest in the trial scene which tragedy ought to inspire, but rather that painful and disgusting feeling with which one witnesses a mere mockery," and is moreover immoral, enticing the vulgar audience to ridicule poor Shylock, when overthrown and overcome by the accumulated results of the trial, his daughter's elopement, and his sufferings at the loss of his money and jewels.

I am not prepared to say that there is not in the downfall of the Jew a little too much human, as distinguished from strictly Christian, feeling manifested. It would perhaps have been better done had Mr. Love, the American professor, framed the story, but that it is grossly cruel, inconsistent, or immoral, I must deny. He proceeds, "If we regard this work of Shakspeare's in a legal point of view, it is from end to end a tissue of absurdities." These are some of his reasons. "How," he asks, "could two rollicking women have taken in the grave and reverend seigniors of Venice?" The counsellor, Portia, being in appearance but a boy of 17 summers, and again in a loftier

manner, "Were the Duke and all of his wise judges and counsellors ignorant of the laws of Venice? Had no one of them the faintest conception of the principles of universal justice? If they had any knowledge whatever of jurisprudence, what must they have thought of the law as laid down by the saucy little Doctor, to the effect that Antonio had no right to discharge the bond by tendering the amount due in open court."

To the Professor's question about the rollicking women I can only re-echo him and say, "How, indeed?" But then I must plead and say this is really in silly stageland. It was not intended to be true, or that you should believe it to be true. It is not true that before telegraphs, electricity, and telephones were known, news arrived within an hour or so of Antonio's losses in Mexico, the Indies, Tripoli, and England; that Bassanio in about the same time had chosen his wife, wedded her, and settled in comfort at Belmont, and had moreover in spite of bad Italian roads and Italian horses, arrived thence in Venice. Of course, if you think it occurs thus in Wall Street, New York, or Market Street, Manchester, you may be puzzled; but as it happens in stageland, you must put it down to the local eccentricities of the place, as if it had occurred at Bolton or Oldham, and not down to any especial vice, or ignorance, or folly of the poet.

But then as to the question whether the wise judges of Venice must not have been dumbfounded by Portia's saucy and preposterous proposition, that you can get rid of a money bond after defeasance, by tendering the amount due in open Court, I can only say I am aghast at a gentleman professing to be a lawyer propounding such a question, and refer you to my answer in the *Law Times*,*

* Nov. 26, 1898.

to his two lengthy articles in the *Law Review*, and the "principles of universal justice" there propounded.

A LAWYER'S COMMENTARY UPON THE FAMOUS CASE OF
"SHYLOCK v. ANTONIO."

To understand the condemned law properly, we had better as a preliminary state the precise facts. Antonio, a merchant, to assist a friend and kinsman, borrows of Shylock, the usurer, 3000 ducats for three months. The principal sum is to be repaid without interest or usance on a specified day and at a specified place at the expiry of that time. Shylock describes the instrument by which the 3000 ducats is nominally to be secured as "a single bond for a sum certain (viz., such sum as is expressed in the condition), 3000 ducats, payable on a certain day at a certain place," the forfeit of the obligation being, by way of jest only, a pound of the merchant Antonio's flesh cut from nearest his heart, this being secured by this "merry bond," signed and sealed in a "merry sport." The act, just as it would be represented to be, by one of the tribe of money lenders, on the recent Royal Commission, being declared an act of kindness, out of friendship, in the words "I would be friends with you and have your love," and as money advanced on personal security without fees, or inquiries, or charges—indeed, out of pure benevolence and as a mere joke. To put Antonio thoroughly off his guard, Shylock points out the complete absurdity of any serious construction attaching to such a friendly proceeding, which is merely intended as a piece of pleasantry.

Here, then, is a money bond in strict legal form, invested with all the sanctity which the law threw around a deed duly sealed and delivered in the time of Elizabeth. It is, as far as I understand it, a perfectly valid deed completed with all the formalities, which absolutely secures and binds the debtor to the day and place of payment, and for the sum of 3000 ducats. So long as it is not broken nor brought into question, or before a court of justice, and no attempt to enforce it is made, this "merry bond" remains. Directly the aid of the law is invoked the scene changes. Our American critic asks sapiently: "How could a contract be at once lawful and unlawful?" "That any contract the end and aim of which is a violation of the law, and the law of the land, is absolutely void, and that this must be a fundamental doctrine of universal law." In the first place there never was a contract,* and to assume that there was, is to beg the whole question.

* A contract pre-supposes the consensus of at least two minds. Shylock declared he could never enforce the bond, it was only a jest. Antonio believed him. The minds were not *ad idem*, therefore there was no contract, a fact to be borne in mind with many similar implied agreements.

The learned lecturer and critic suggests that if this contract, as he insists on calling it, is regarded from a legal point of view, "it is from end to end a tissue of absurdities." This is to set up an imaginary case for the purpose of vanquishing it. Portia declares the bond valid, and this it appears to me, and, if the Jew had kept it in his private drawer and had stuck to his word that it was a joke, and was made in love, valid for what it was worth it would have remained. But then this inexorable censor proceeds: For Portia in the very next breath immediately and ridiculously to proclaim that Shylock has committed a crime in trying to enforce it by a court of law indeed—"has committed a heinous crime"—is the very height of absurdity.

Wherein? one may well ask. Portia never said that it was a contract, and never intended to say anything so silly. She knew it was a bond. She knew it to be perfectly valid while Shylock kept it in his own possession, and never directly or indirectly attempted to enforce it. But the ill-advised usurer wanted judgment, and also to proceed to execution under it. To achieve this a preliminary step was necessary. It must be taken to a court of justice, and proof must be made, in case its terms should be disputed, otherwise the forfeiture or penalty could not be ascertained. Where, then, was the "tissue of absurdities from end to end" in Portia saying substantially this: "I have looked at the four corners of this deed; it is a good and valid instrument and obligation, binding on the obligee, or," adding with a view to further effect, "entitling the obligor to such forfeiture as may be decreed"? If this was bad law in Coke's day, will the learned professor point out how and where it is bad? Portia did not think it was bad. She declares the forfeiture made by nonpayment to be due, and this the law allowed and the court adjudged.

Here we are presumed to tarry to give the usurer a present opportunity of explaining his jest, and how far he meant it to go, and ask if he really insisted—deliberately and advisedly insisted—on the whole penalty. Would not the money-lender pause in mercy? Would he not call in a surgeon? Would he not stay his vindictive hand? No, he would not; it was not in the bond. He would abide by the letter of the law. Then Portia asks if he demands judgment and sentence, and she expounds for the court in a theatrical and stage manner, for stage manners differ from formal real manners, as every child knows. That as he requires a decree, it will not be the decree he expects or wishes. That, although the bond is *per se* perfectly good and valid, its attempted enforcement by law is not. The court will therefore give him no assistance.

On the other hand, as he has malignantly aimed at the life of a citizen, by the law of the state his goods will be forfeited, and he will be in mercy. Where is the tissue of absurdities in this? Unluckily, to strengthen his position, this legal mentor has added that Bassanio's tender of the 3000

ducats in court, or twice that sum, was a good satisfaction and final discharge. He declares Portia ignorant for not accepting it as a good and valid tender. I should have thought the veriest legal tyro would have known better—that tender after action is no tender. That to have made it good as an acquittance, the person making it must aver that he was ready and willing, and had always been ready and willing to tender the money, and had tendered it. But perhaps the professor enjoys a law of his own.

It is sufficient to say that Shakspeare did not frame the story to vilify a Hebrew. The story had been in existence throughout Europe, translated into many languages, published in many forms, metrically, as ballad and as story, and as a drama. Shakspeare adopted it as one of those world-wide stories which he usually adopted when he could, and at once raised the Hebrew from the position of a monster and brute, as he appeared in Kit Marlowe's Barabas, to the dignity of a man, and indeed something of a hero. For has not Heine, himself a Jew, disposed of this aspersion. Heine certainly does not seem to agree with the critic that Shakspeare selected Shylock to make him a "hideous caricature." There is a piece of parallel nonsense suggesting that Portia's quibble was "pettifogging" and "a miserable pettifogger's quibble." I have always thought that the discovery of any loophole, no matter how subtle in favour of life, was not merely justifiable but honourable. That wise men have been "astute to discover" technicalities of the most trivial kind, to save the rigour of the law in matters of life and limb. I have always thought a "pettifogger" a person who resorted to base and dishonourable tricks for an evil end. Even the American authority Webster declares him "an inferior attorney or lawyer who is employed in small and mean business." Surely the saving of the life of a generous Christian merchant, and in a play which was to be the delight of the world for a thousand years to come, is neither a small nor a mean business.





TRAGEDY AS IT WAS WRITTEN.

BY ARTHUR W. FOX.

IN these sickly sentimental days of somewhat unreal realism, many critics are too refined, as they themselves would arrogantly put it, to be able to appreciate Shakespeare's tragedies in all their native vigour. They do not care to see realistic bloodshed on the stage, but prefer to have the needful murders committed with decent privacy behind the scenes. Yet these same squeamish persons will not uncommonly treat themselves to a murderous melodrama, which has all the vulgar elements of a tragedy without its compensating dignity. If, then, by some unkindness of fortune they were compelled to witness the older tragedy of such poets as Robert Greene, what extravagances of outraged delicacy would not their shocked susceptibilities induce them to commit? Poet, as he undoubtedly was, Greene without scruple represented the murders of more than half his characters as taking place in the full sight of the spectators. His practice is not defended; but it is destructive and throws much light upon the artistic development of the British Drama. It is more than probable that his ferocious murder scenes would have the same appetising effect upon those who saw them, as that which is produced by taking children to a slaughter-house. But it must be left to the moralist to

decide whether this is a wholly unmixed blessing. Our object is to pay our tester, and to take our places to witness the first part of the tragedy of *Selimus*. The play in question was published in 1594, and had probably been acted many times before the date of its publication. That it was calculated to keep the stage in the face of greater rivals, does not seem likely; and, if reproduced to day, the tragedy would cause more amusement than terror to such critics as can penetrate into the realism of the stage. But for all its defects of construction, and its rivers of bloodshed, it contains lines of a magnificent though somewhat grandiose rhythm.

The plot of *Selimus* is briefly this. Bajazet the aged Emperor of the Turks, has suffered defeat at the hands of his enemies, and his only loyal son, Alemshae, has fallen in battle. He has been forced to conclude a disadvantageous peace, which has earned him the disfavour of his subjects, and his old age is tortured by the expectation of rebellion under his youngest son, Selimus. He thus tells his family troubles:—

I have three sons all of unequal ages,
And all in diverse studies set their bliss.
Coreut, my eldest, a Philosopher;
Acomat pompous, Selim a warrior;
Coreut in fair Magnesia leads his life
In learning arts, and Mahound's dreaded laws;
Acomat loves to court it with his wife,
And in a pleasant quiet 'joys to pause;
But Selim follows wars in dismal strife,
And snatcheth at my crown with greedy claws;
But he shall miss that which he would be at,
For I reserve it for my Acomat.

Selim possesses the heart alike of the army and of the nation; hence Bajazet fears that his youngest son will dethrone him, or at least frustrate his cherished aim. Consequently his suspicions are aroused against the

Bashaws, of whom Mustaffa and Cherseoli are faithful to him and fare ill for their loyalty. In the midst of the old monarch's troubles a message comes from Selim to say, that of his own accord, he has married a daughter of hostile Tartary. Whereat Bajazet is highly indignant. The next moment, with the wonderful celerity of stage operations, the presence of Selim is announced with "Two hundred thousand strong Tartarians," ready to overthrow his father and to reign in his stead. In a fine soliloquy he explains his intentions, after which he sends a message to his father demanding an interview, and retires to take counsel with his friends, while he is awaiting an answer.

Bajazet naturally distrusting the good faith of a son, who has come with a great army, refuses to see him, and sets out post-haste for safety to Byzantium. Thereupon all the untamed ferocity of Selim's nature breaks forth into the following comparatively strong language:—

Now by the dreaded name of Termagant,
And by the blackest brook of loathsome hell,
Since he is so unnatural to me,
I will prove as unnatural as he.
Thinks he to stop my mouth with gold or pearl?
Or rusty jades fet from Barbaria?
No, let his minion, his philosopher
Coreut, and Acomat, be enriched with them;
I will not take my rest, till this right hand
Have pull'd the crown off from his coward's head,
And on the ground his bastard's gore-blood shed;
Nor shall his flight to old Byzantium
Dismay my thoughts, which never learn'd to stoop.
March, Sinam, march, in order after him:
Were his light steeds as swift as Pegasus,
And trod the airy pavement with their heels,
Yet Selimus would overtake them soon.
And though the heavens do ne'er so crossly frown,
In spite of heaven, shall Selim wear the crown.

Selim is not long in marching off to Byzantium, where he holds a stormy conference with his father, and immediately afterwards sets his battle in array, but only to court defeat. Next comes the first death in the play. Ottrante, one of Selim's captains, kills Cherseoli, and is taken prisoner by Bajazet, who thus pronounces his doom :—

Off with his head and spoil him of his arms ;
And leave his body for the airy birds.

The decree is at once executed, though this time behind the scenes, and so the second involuntary death takes place.

Next Acomat enters in a soldier's garb with Regan, his wife, and a large army, whose object is to force his father to fulfil his promise of abdication. Bajazet in the meantime sleeps after the defeat of Selim, but only to be awakened by a letter from Acomat demanding his resignation. The old Emperor admits his promise, and is preparing to carry it out, when a messenger from Corcut arrives begging him not to yield the crown to either of his younger sons. By the faithful Mustaffa's advice Bajazet determines to rule until the close of the chapter ; a resolution, which arouses all the wolf in Acomat's soul, and impels him to force his father to keep his promise. On his way he attacks his nephew Mahomet, son of Alemshae, and Governor of Natolia, and Zonara, his niece. When he has taken the town, he condemns Mahomet to death, who is slain behind the scenes, while Zonara is strangled before the spectators. The tale of deaths thus reaches four. The coffins containing the corpses of his grandchildren are then carried to Bajazet by Belierby, who dies from his wounds before the Emperor's face—the fifth death so far. Bajazet's wrath is set on fire, but his love for his favourite son, Acomat, induces him to send Aga as his messenger to plead with his mutinous

son. The reward of that faithful servant is to have his eyes pulled out by the savage prince, while his hands are cut off and laid in his bosom. The maimed and blinded Aga, who by a merciful dispensation of the dramatist, does not faint from loss of blood, but declaims at some length and with much force, returns to his master in pitiful plight. Goaded to desperation Bajazet sends to Selim for help, who thus obtains the coveted opportunity of securing his proclamation as Emperor of the Turks.

The aged monarch cannot choose but yield, and he departs with the kindly wish:—

Live thou a long and a victorious reign,
And be triumpher of thine enemies;
Aga and I will to Dimoticum,
And live in peace the remnant of our days.

But he little suspected the cruel device of his son, who sent Abraham the Jew to make an end of both Bajazet and Aga. Abraham first drinks poison himself, and thus induces his victims to do the like. In due time Corcut in disguise comes on to the stage to take revenge, if possible upon Selim. But he falls into his brother's hands, by whom he is strangled after a brief and angry parley. Next Mustaffa, by whose advice Alladin, Acomat's son, has fled, is brought before Selim, and promptly strangled with Solyma his wife; thus the number of deaths from the beginning of the play increases to eleven. The bloodthirsty tyrant then turns his attention to Acomat's wife, and when he takes her prisoner he submits to hear her reproaches for a brief space, at the end of which he says:—

Strangle her, Bali, let her scold no more.

which is done with enviable ease, celerity, and precision. Lastly, Acomat himself is taken and strangled, making the *thirteenth* victim during the course of the tragedy. Of

these two only are disposed of behind the scenes. Well, then may the pious critic exclaim in the words of a greater than Greene, "It is a bloody business!"

But Greene, so far from being content with victims enough to have set up three ordinary tragedies, concludes his tale of massacre with a kind promise of more and mightier ones to follow:—

Thus have we brought victorious Selimus
Unto the crown of great Arabia;
Next shall you see him with triumphant sword,
Dividing kingdoms into equal shares,
And give them to his warlike followers.
If this first part, Gentles, do like you well,
The second part shall greater murthers tell.

"*Greater Murthers!*" good heavens! What would the poet have? Are not thirteen victims enough to satisfy his greedy palate, and more than enough for a quiet spectator? If the tragedy had been realistically represented, its effect upon all who saw it would have been as tragic as its plot. But to the thoughtful critic the plethora of bloodshed is at once comical and pathetic. It is comical in its unreality. The murders were in fact spread over a long space of time, whereas in the play they are heaped together in the action of perhaps four hours. Like a modern melodrama the tragedy loses its tragic force in the number of its victims, with whom the reader is not always inclined to be unsympathetic. But the tragedy is pathetic, too, in its lavish waste of creative power. Had Greene been endowed with a keen sense of humour he could hardly have constructed his play in its present form: he must have perceived that the intensity of pathos is weakened rather than heightened by the overwhelming number of promiscuous victims. The palpitating reader gets a surfeit of murders, which become ridiculous rather than horrible from their

frequency. He keeps murmuring to himself, "There will be another murder in the next scene," than which no thought can be more fatal to tragic effectiveness. While all the lines of tragedy should undoubtedly converge upon the climax, yet when a climax is thirteen times repeated it is in danger of degenerating into an anti-climax in the long run.

Greene's play does not appeal to the dramatic critic as a play. Its construction is of the loosest, and its scenes form rather a series of pageants linked together by fine declamation and a host of sanguinary murders, than a tragedy in any proper sense of the word. The characteristic of the verse is declamation rather than pure poetry, though there are abundant evidences that Greene was a poet of no mean order. But his constructive capacity was singularly limited in certain directions, and he seldom appears to have been able to secure that saving concentration which is the essential of a great tragedian. His scenes do not fit into one another with that inevitable connection which is truly dramatic, and whenever his characters come together, like Irishmen at a fair, they are sure to fight. The play of *Selimus* is a *history* rather than *tragedy*, and it loses much interest by being a piece of ancient history. Furthermore, the victors in any of the numerous engagements promptly proceed to behead, blind, maim, poison, or strangle one or other of the vanquished, and so to rid themselves of objectional members of their family and of their foes. The method is certainly simple, but a little lacking in fine art. When a play begins with twenty-four characters exclusive of supernumeraries, and when during its course no less than thirteen of these are cut off by one of the aforesaid methods, the action becomes curious to say the least of it. Besides the rapidity of sequence of not

strictly consecutive events is quite bewildering, and the reader finds himself carried over space and time with a swiftness which suggests the mediation of "the slaves of the lamp."

Yet in spite of its defects, and of its transparent lack of restraint, the tragedy of *Selimus* is by no means unattractive. It has sonorous lines of stately declamation and purple patches of true poetry. There is a grandeur of brutality even about the blasphemous parricide Selimus, while the weakness of Bajazet is touchingly portrayed.

It may be true that all the characters speak in much the same exalted tones, and have a strong family likeness. But this much interest attaches to each of them in that the reader wonders when each will meet his appointed fate. The power of the author is conspicuous from first to last, and had he been endowed with as much restraint as force his play would have been more impressive. But it would seem manifest that though Greene's style is dramatic, he lacked that subtle tact and nicety of characterisation, which alone can make a dramatist of the first order. There is, moreover, a strain of bombast about the man which does not suit with tragic composition. His lines are in many instances grandiloquent rather than grand, in which defect they afford a striking contrast to "Marlowe's mighty line." Whether he ever completed the second part of his tragedy or not is uncertain, but if it contained more murders than the part which has survived, few will regret its passing. Indeed, there would hardly have been characters enough left at the end to bury the corpses of those slain during its course. Murder is no doubt interesting in itself, especially to its victims, as well as an integral part of tragedy. But it should be done with moderation and at decent intervals of time if it is to be effective. And

when in one tragedy more than half of the characters are slain in the first part, the pitiful reader will probably be content to take the second part on trust, lest its end should be like that of a Kilkenny cat—nothing but a *tale*.

SONNET.

A DREAM OF A SKYLARK'S SONG.

BY J. A. GOODACRE.

I dreamt I heard the lark's sweet morning lay,
And as I watched the minstrel's heavenward flight,
The soaring sound and gently quivering sight
Caused thrills of joy around my heart to play
Like wings invisible which bore away
My ravished soul to that ethereal height,
Where sky and sun and song seemed to unite
In the effulgence of a perfect day.

Entranced I rose, like saintly men of old,
From earth to heaven in a moment's time ;
Like holy John I looked through gates of gold
Into a city of celestial prime,
And heard seraphic hymns and songs sublime
By choirs unseen for evermore out-rolled.





